Still Life and Death Metal: Painting the Battle Jacket

By
Thomas Robert Cardwell

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Supervision Team:

Mark Fairnington (Director of Studies)

David Cross / James Faure Walker

University of the Arts London CCW

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Abstract

This thesis aims to conduct a study of *battle jackets* using painting as a recording and analytical tool. A battle jacket is a customised garment worn in heavy metal subcultures that features decorative patches, band insignia, studs and other embellishments Battle jackets are significant in the expression of subcultural identity for those that wear them, and constitute a global phenomenon dating back at least to the 1970s.

The art practice juxtaposes and re-contextualises cultural artefacts in order to explore the narratives and traditions that they are a part of. As such, the work is situated within the genre of contemporary still life and appropriative painting. The paintings presented with the written thesis document a series of jackets and creatively explore the jacket form and related imagery.

The study uses a number of interrelated critical perspectives to explore the meaning and significance of the jackets. Intertextual approaches explore the relationship of the jackets to other cultural forms. David Muggleton's 'distinctive individuality' and Sarah Thornton's 'subcultural capital' are used to emphasise the importance of jacket making practices for expressions of personal and corporate subcultural identity. Italo Calvino's use of postmodern semiotic structures gives a tool for placing battle jacket practice within a shifting network of meanings, whilst Richard Sennett's 'material consciousness' helps to understand the importance of DIY making practices used by fans. The project refers extensively to a series of interviews conducted with battle jacket makers between 2014 and 2016.

Recent art historical studies of still life painting have used a materialist critique of historic works to demonstrate the uniqueness of painting as a method of analysis. The context for my practice involves historical references such as seventeenth century Dutch still life painting. The work of contemporary artists who are exploring the themes and imagery of extreme metal music is also reviewed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Portrait of the artist as a young metalhead

An animated skeleton squeezes the life from a dove which clutches a mimosa branch. The skull's eye and ear sockets are covered with metal plates and its jaw is wired shut, in a reference to the injunction to 'see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil'. The figure is dressed in a business suit to identify him as a ghoulish parody of a governmental or corporate figure. In the background, F14 fighter jets strafe his shoulder with gunfire. The skeleton's name is Vic Rattlehead – the mascot of thrash metal band Megadeth – and he features in this artwork for their 1987–1988 tour by graphic artist Ed Repka. The slogan reads 'Peace Sells … But Who's Buying?' which, together with the image, communicates the band's concerns with contemporary threats of nuclear war and the corruption of power. Whilst the lyrics and general opinions of the band would seem to oppose these horrors, by an irony common to much heavy metal music the artworks, slogans and lyrics revel in the aggression and destruction, albeit in an exaggerated, pantomime way.

This artwork featured on the first back patch I bought as a young metal fan, aged about eleven. I bought it, along with some metal studs and smaller patches, in a tiny, hidden-away shop upstairs from a newsagent's in Salisbury. After taking this haul home, I spent hours sewing them on to my hitherto very un-cool dark blue denim jacket. I remember being captivated by the crude chiaroscuro of the image, and the use of the dark background to heighten the drama of the theatrical figure. I was also struck by the physical properties of the screenprint by which the picture was reproduced. The rubberised ink had a tactile quality and a distinct smell that still has powerful associations for me, like Proust's madeleines (the small cakes which famously evoked powerful childhood associations for the writer) transposed to a very different milieu.

The rendering of the original painting through computerised pixellation gave it a somewhat harsh, ersatz quality – the graining of the shaded areas replaced any painterly qualities or eidetic trace that the original might have had. I found the image thrillingly grotesque, and whilst I was a very non-threatening middle-class child growing up in an idyllic Hampshire village, I thought that by donning my jacket emblazoned with the exoticness of the American band I might look a bit cooler in the eyes of the older, tougher kids on the school bus.

I went on to create several more jackets based on denim or cut-off army shirts. I began to hand-paint designs straight on to the fabric, using acrylic model paints. By the time I was fifteen I had acquired my first black leather jacket, on to which I proudly transcribed a copy of Joolz Denby's artwork for the post-punk rock band New Model Army's album *The Ghost of Cain.* I soon realised the advantages of painting on to leather – the less porous surface did not soak up the paint like fabric did, meaning the paint would flow more easily. The smoothness of leather also allowed much greater refinement of line and detail, although painting on to black brought other challenges. Most colours needed underpainting in white, and it wasn't so easy to pre-draw designs.

One of the things I found so fascinating about Denby's design was that it was a scheme for the entire jacket, not just an isolated patch. Its strength lay in its simplicity – the pared-down white and red on the black background and the conjunction of image and text. This in part reflected the lyrical concerns of New Model Army, a post-punk rock band with strongly held left-wing views (*Biography*, 2016). They had sympathies with the ideals of the DDR, and the predominant use of red, black and white in much of their early artwork was not just stylistic. By the time I went to art school I was no longer wearing my customised jackets, and sadly I don't have any record of them to show today. However, my formative love of

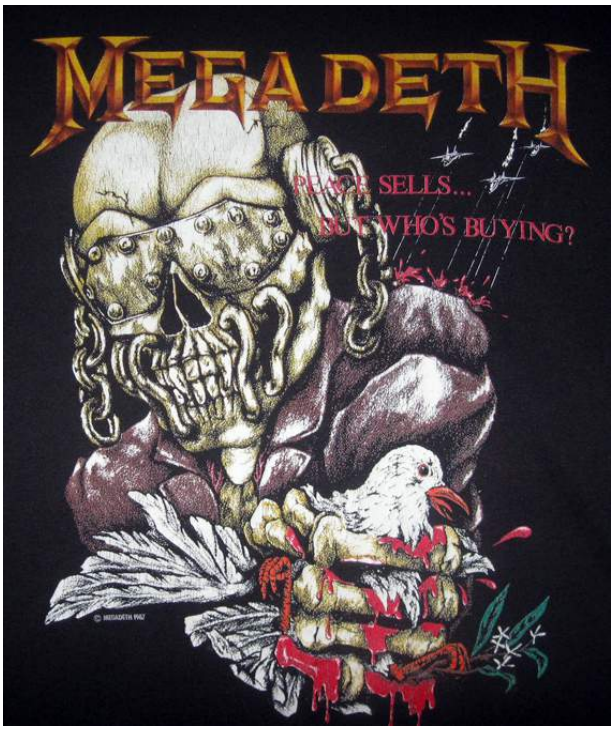

Figure 1.1: Artwork for Megadeth's *Peace Sells … But Who's Buying?* by Ed Repka, screen print on patch, 1987. © Capitol Records. Available at photobucket.com

Figure 1.2: Artwork for New Model Army's *The Ghost of Cain* by Joolz Denby, photograph of hand-painted leather jacket, 1986. Available at newmodelarmy.org

metal album artworks and my instinctive practice of re-creating them as jacket paintings and the endless inevitable doodles on school books had left me with an enduring fascination for the symbolism of these images and the way that they could be combined with text to give them new meanings.[1] I developed an interest in still life painting, and in particular the ways that objects could be used to communicate more abstract ideas. The poignant interplay between the material and non-material worlds fascinated me and informed a painting practice based around studies of objects and images that act as interfaces for layers of cultural and subcultural meaning.

'They should represent your life … in bands' – The contemporary significance of battle jackets

The practice of creating customised jackets displaying collections of band logos probably began in the late 1970s and is now widespread in metal subcultures.[2] Particularly prominent in the heavy metal and thrash scenes of the 1980s, battle jackets became an external marker of the serious metal fan or band member. Recently the jackets have risen in popularity once more, with the renaissance of metal styles and bands from this era.

The battle jacket (also known as a battle vest, cut-off, patch jacket or kutte) is usually a denim jacket, often with the sleeves removed and worn

[1] The practice of doodling might be thought of as an adolescent resistance to the authority of the education system – the pupil who doodles in a lesson is in a sense subversive as they are using their time and educational materials in ways that are considered wasteful in relation to the programme of the lesson. The adult practices of subcultural customisation might also be thought of as subversive in similar ways, a view expressed by John Fiske (1990) in relation to the customisation of denim jeans. The artist S. Mark Gubb (2012) produced a series of sculptures comprising school desks engraved with heavy metal album covers, which make this link explicitly.

[2] As with most fan and folk customisation practices, it is very difficult to find exact records of when this began. In the course of this research I have met several people who have jackets that they began making in the 1970s, and anecdotal opinion seems to support the view that the end of this decade is when the practice of hand-embroidering band logos on to denim jackets became popular amongst music fans rather than just bikers. The M Shed Museum in Bristol has an embroidered jacket from this era. Mass production and sale of band logo patches was established by the early 1980s, according to interview subjects.

over other clothing such as a leather biker jacket (figure 1.3). The vest is decorated with cloth patches (embroidered or screen-printed), metal badges, studs, stitching and sometimes hand-painted or embroidered text and images. These embellishments are used to advertise the wearer's music taste and often bear band logos and artwork.

Whilst the motivations behind making the jackets as well as the values attached to them vary between fans, in almost all cases the jacket is considered to be a highly personal garment that reflects the specific and often idiosyncratic tastes of the wearer.[3] It is personal in terms of the choice of bands represented, as well as the exact artwork that is chosen and the configuration of patches and various practices of customisation (discussed in detail in chapter 3). At the same time, these embellishments follow a set of accepted patterns and practices tacitly negotiated within the subculture. As will be argued in chapter 4, in some ways precedents for these practices might be found in a range of historic and contemporary examples such as military uniforms and folk costumes. Shifts in attitude can be observed between fans from the original 1980s subcultures to those who have taken up the practice more latterly. It seems that at least for some contemporary fans the jacket has become part of an overall image that they wish to create, often quite quickly, whilst for older fans the rules governing how the jacket should be constructed are stricter. These concerns will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. This phenomenon might be explained in terms of the move from subculture to post-subculture (Muggleton, 2000), or in terms of the detachment of signifier and signifier observed by postmodern theorists such as Jean Baudrillard (1994). In this sense the contemporary incarnation of the battle jacket can be viewed as

[3] Many fans that I interviewed made a point of saying that they liked an eclectic mix of bands and music styles. This quote from Chris is typical: 'People always say to me, like, when they look at me from the back they don't know what to categorise my musical taste. 'Cause it goes, like, death metal, black metal, glam, rap, rock, groove … I think it's good to show, like, an eclectic music taste. Not sticking to one style' (Chris, 2014, p. 4, grammar unchanged).

a sophisticated example of postmodern subcultural expression and consumption (Williams, 2011).

The extreme nature of the subject matter of metal music, often containing overtly violent, horrific or occult references, has been widely commented on, notably by Keith Kahn-Harris (2004, 2006). This extends to the album covers, promotional artwork and logos associated with the bands (Aldis and Sherry, 2006). Dark or violent imagery is a key part of the identity of many metal bands and is prominently displayed on battle jackets. Whilst this can give the wearer a menacing or misanthropic appearance, particularly to those outside the subculture, metal fans are often friendly in person, and metal communities tend to be characterised by strong internal bonds and camaraderie (Kahn-Harris, 2004). In this sense the jacket can be seen as an interface of contradictions: the visual order of the customisation, the violence of the images displayed, and the friendship and internalised norms that characterise the subculture. Indeed, for many fans the extreme nature of the themes and imagery of some metal music act as a kind of ‘shibboleth’, marking the wearer out from the mainstream by their willingness to embrace that which is considered offensive or repugnant by many (Allett, 2013; Bardine, 2015; Kahn-Harris, 2004). It is therefore essential to analyse the jackets at the visual level, and this study will look closely at how the visual and material aspects of the jackets relate to the values and opinions of the wearers and the bands represented.

The role of painting as methodology – painting as transcription

In the words of Grayson Perry, ‘I am not an anthropologist … neither am I a sociologist or a design historian. I am an artist’ (Perry, 2013, p. 9). In this project I approach my subject as an artist first and foremost. Painting practice is at the centre of my methodology and will perform several distinct yet related roles.

First, a series of fairly detailed observational paintings will be used to transcribe examples of actual jackets sourced from photographs, usually from fans I have met and spoken to (figure 1.4). These will form a selective survey, examining various examples of jackets from different subgenres of metal music. In these works, the process of painting will help me to analyse the visual properties of the jackets – composition, use of symmetry, colour combinations, repetition of images, types of line, styles of text and so forth. I choose the word 'transcribe' carefully. Rather than creating copies (simulation) or replicas (imitation), I will be translating the image of the jacket from the physical object (or the photograph of it) to a painted likeness, or perhaps an approximation of it. The use of watercolour paints combined with small scale (38 × 26 cm) for many of these studies limits the level of detail that is possible. This deliberately resists any tendency towards photorealism, and all the agendas that practice entails. Rather than the conceptual photographic paintings characteristic of artists such as Gerhardt Richter,[4] these are reinterpretations of the jackets through painting. The term 'transcription' usually implies a transfer of information through a change of state. Content is moved from one medium to another, such as when spoken words are written down on paper or typed into a computer. The sounds are not present in the second version, but the meanings that are carried by them are. Conceptual approaches to painting as a methodology will be explored in chapter 2.

The time-consuming procedure of making these paintings will require me to observe the source jackets very closely. This will help me to understand the ways in which they are composed for particular visual impact, and to note recurring traits common to groups of jackets. Using painting in this way to transcribe and document has an enduring precedent (see chapter

[4] Richter wrote of his photo paintings: 'When I paint from a photograph, conscious thinking is eliminated. I don't know what I am doing. My work is far closer to the *informel* than to any kind of "realism". The photograph has an abstraction of its own, which is not easy to see through' (Richter, 2009, p. 29).

Figure 1.3: Aiden's battle jacket, O2, London, UK, 2013. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

2). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century portraits by Hans Holbein and William Larkin record in detail the clothing and adornments of their sitters, as costume at this point was an important signifier of role and status. During the 1960s and 1970s, artists such as Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton incorporated details of contemporary clothing and accessories into their works. Blake's *Self Portrait with Badges* (1961) is a useful example. More recently, David Hancock has used detailed painting to examine the ways in which goth teenagers display identity through clothing (*The Beautiful People*, 2001a) and Kehinde Wiley references salon portraiture in his contemporary depictions of African Americans that incorporate fastidious recording of clothing and fabrics.

A note on the importance of the paintings

Whilst painting can be described in such ways as a research methodology, there is a sense in which any creative practice necessarily goes beyond the limits of description. The creative works are things in themselves that in some ways defy description or interpretation. The centrality of painting practice to my research here is precisely that the paintings serve to extend and unite the various strands of the written research, and to offer a new terrain in which they might be explored. Overlaps, inconsistencies and incongruities in this domain can be seen not as errors but as opportunities for the subject to be perceived in a new light.

'The life of people among material things' (Bryson, 1990, p. 131): still life painting as cultural critique – Norman Bryson's reading of the paintings of Willem Kalf

In *Looking at the Overlooked* (1990), Norman Bryson offers a reading of still life painting as a materialist critique in which the re-presentation of cultural objects through painting locates them as interfaces for multi-layered socio-political meanings. The importance of craft in these works is also emphasised as a kind of 'gold standard' of value (through labour)

against the anxieties of consumer culture (Bryson, 1990, p. 132). Bryson suggests that Willem Kalf's paintings of armour and other crafted objects (figure 1.5) alter the audience's relationship with the originals – the painting of the crafted object is so masterful that it even outstrips the objects themselves, creating a sort of 'symbolic lack' in the original object:

> If these objects are already masterpieces, why should they be repeated in a second masterpiece? The duplication of elaborative work begins to point to a process that is as endless as it is without reason; the replica indicates a deficiency in the original object that will not be remedied by the supplement, but contaminates it and so to speak hollows it out (Bryson, 1990, p. 126).

The flower paintings of Ambrosius Bosschaert are interpreted as symbols of empire; the exotic blooms and rare shells from far corners of the globe hint at the vast distances and lands that produced them. The paintings thus become *wunderkammers*, private collections of symbolic objects that are fixed in 'panoptic space' (Bryson, 1990, p. 108) through paint into collections to be
possessed by the eye of the owner. Likewise, Hanneke Grootenboer (2005) analyses Dutch still life from a phenomenological perspective, suggesting that the act of painting objects is a form of thinking and that such art deals with the complex act of visualisation as much as it describes objects.

These interpretations of still life painting are important for me in thinking through my own practice as a method of examining and questioning the ways in which objects as depicted in paintings can carry complex cultural meanings – often obscured, overlapping, contradictory. Following Bryson, the battle jacket can also be thought of as a contemporary *wunderkammer*, confining and 'possessing' music taste in a personal way, and converting the images it contains into subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) for the wearer.

In a secondary series of works, I use representational painting to reflect upon the jackets and other constructed works I have made by incorporating them into new configurations and arrangements (figure 1.6). A detailed discussion of some of these works can be found in chapter 6.

Saxl's continuity of images

The art historian Fritz Saxl argued that symbolic images persist and recur through various times and cultures since ancient civilisation. In his seminal lecture 'Continuity and Variation in the Meaning of Images' (1957) he elaborated this theory using three significant example categories: the figure of a woman holding two snakes and trampling a lion; a man wrestling and subduing a bull; and the winged 'angel' figure. Saxl suggested that there are connections through all of human culture and civilisation, and that artists always borrow and appropriate from existing types in order to say something of relevance to their own context. Sometimes the meanings applied to these images might shift over time and place, but there are often threads of continuity. From a more postmodern perspective, a useful contextual critique can be found in ideas of intertextuality such as those advanced by Roland Barthes (1977) and Julia Kristeva (1980).

Applying these ideas, I suggest in chapter 5 that the images (and at times logos) featured on battle jackets – which are usually derived from album cover art – often have links with images and symbols found in art historical tradition. The website *Heavy Music Artwork* (www.heavymusicartwork.com, 2016) documents numerous examples of album covers that feature art from 'old masters', either directly in reproduction or through clear influence. My analysis in chapter 4 will go further in shedding light on specific pathways of influence from past to present in metal artwork. Even when the influence of past images is less

Figure 1.4: Tom Cardwell, *Manowar*, 2013, painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm.

Figure 1.5: Willem Kalf, *Still Life with a Chinese Bowl, a Nautilus Cup and other Objects*, 1662, painting, oil on canvas, 79 × 67 cm, © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. Available at www.wga.hu

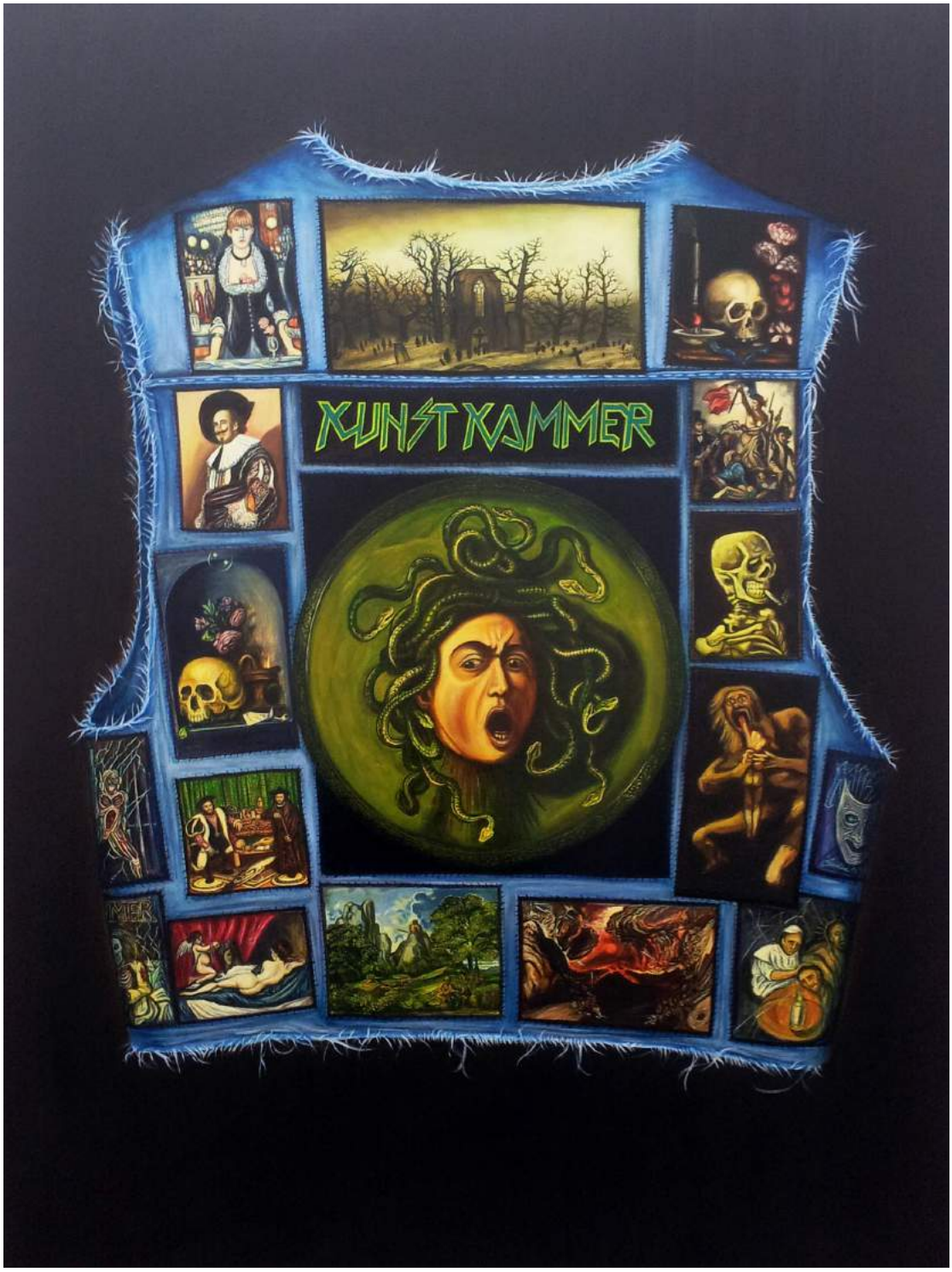

Figure 1.6: Tom Cardwell, *Kunstkammer*, 2013–2014, painting, oil on canvas 150 × 90 cm.

overt, many visual devices used in metal artwork can be linked to previous iterations. Such a process of clarifying these connections might serve to refute some of the historicising tendency of the elaborative duplication of popular cultural narratives, illustrated in the 'endless duplication' described by Bryson.

Through drawing attention to the connections between these two distinct cultural traditions, new light can be shed on both. Chapter 5 will attempt to trace the symbols of a specific jacket in this way. Thus one of the aims of my studio practice is to juxtapose iconography from art history with that of metal culture. My recent painting *Kunstkammer* (2013–2014) (figure 1.6) depicts a battle jacket featuring images not from album covers but rather from well-known paintings such as Goya's *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons*, Caravaggio's *Medusa* and Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People.* In selecting the artworks to populate this fictional jacket, I chose pieces that contained something of the drama and horror of typical metal images, but that were also influential for me as a young artist. A related work entitled *Kulturgeist* (2014) (figure 1.7) comprises an actual denim vest, decorated with patches that I have designed and either produced in embroidery or hand painted. Several of these also feature imagery from famous paintings and are devised as logos and artwork for two fictional metal bands I have invented – the *Kunstkammer* and *Kulturgeist* of the titles.

The battle jacket as historic folk art practice

In viewing the battle jacket as an art object I am situating it within a long and rich tradition of customised garments. From medieval heraldry through decorative armour, military uniforms, hand-painted aircrew jackets and of course biker jackets, the metal fan's jacket is part of an on-going practice of inscribing identities visually on clothing. From this perspective, the battle jacket can be aligned with wider folk art practices which function through

customisation and group identity (Kenny, McMillan and Myrone, 2014a). Chapter 4 will discuss these wider connections between the battle jacket and other cultural objects and making practices.

Figure 1.7: Tom Cardwell, *Kulturgeist*, 2014, garment, custom embroidery and acrylic paint on denim jacket, dimensions variable.

It is thus that the battle jacket can be read as a material document of difference: a crafted object that inscribes the identity and affiliations of its wearer, communicating membership of the subculture and opposition to a perceived mainstream (Hebdige, 1979). Through making, the artist interacts with the world, shaping the elements that are to hand (Sennett, 2008).

It is a creative practice that facilitates understanding and continues an enduring dialogue. Within contemporary art, particularly in the UK, there is a current interest in the value and relationship of folk art practices within the system of the arts as a whole. Jeremy Deller (2005), Alan Kane (2010), Grayson Perry (2012) and Mark Wallinger (2007) have all created works that seek to challenge traditional cultural hierarchies after the manner of Berger (1972). These projects call for a realignment of the boundaries of art and culture to encompass the products of folk traditions – traditionally excluded from the high art canon – and to show these as valuable in their own right (Smith, 2013). A potential criticism of such practices is that they seek to validate folk or mass culture by conferring on it the values of the art establishment, and this present study is not exempted. However, one must work from the position in which one finds oneself, and in my analysis I will seek to consider how social divisions might be perpetuated or challenged by artists in this area.

The exhibition *British Folk Art* (10 June – 31 August 2014, Tate Britain, London) (Kenny, McMillan and Myrone, 2014b) presented a selection of artefacts from historic folk traditions, from artisan shop signs to embroidered quilts and naval figureheads. Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, in a BBC *Culture Show* broadcast (17 June 2014) about the exhibition comment that it fails to represent current folk practices and refers exclusively to historic objects. By contrast, Deller and Kane's exhibition *Folk Archive* (12 May 2005 – 24 July 2005, Barbican, London) (Deller and Kane, 2005) presented a wide range of contemporary folk art objects. These included handmade signs for fast food vans, customised cars, prison tattoo guns, airbrushed motorcycle helmets and costumes from

present-day folk festivals. Though battle jackets did not feature in this selection, they might well have done, as they can be categorised as just such a contemporary folk art practice. Similarly, Kane's exhibition *Vanitas Vanitatum Omnia Vanitas :)* (13 January 2010 – 12 February 2010, Fashion Space Gallery, London) (Kane, 2010) featured a series of large-scale photographs of embroidered skull patches. Situating images of these subcultural insignia in a gallery context re-connected them with the art historical theme of the *vanitas* in still life painting. The importance of craft and DIY making, as well as links to folk art traditions, will be explored in the latter section of chapter 3.

Why choose battle jackets?

My motivations for researching battle jackets and making artwork about them were initially personal and to some extent autobiographical. As mentioned earlier, I created several jackets as a teenager in the late 1980s and early 1990s but I didn't continue the practice into adulthood. I remained a fan of metal music, although as I got older my tastes broadened and I no longer identified primarily as a member of the metal subculture. Through my painting practice as an adult I became interested in cultural and folk objects and the significance and symbolism they carry. This led me to reconsider battle jackets as one such example, and to reflect on my earlier experiences of making them. As I have researched this project I am struck by how significant class identity seems to be for me in my relation to it. Deena Weinstein (2007) has discussed the reasons for heavy metal's predominantly white, male, working-class audience, and my own primary research seems to confirm that this demographic still makes up the majority of metal fans (although arguably metal's audience is diversifying as time goes on).

Whilst I am white and male, I had a middle-class upbringing and I have found it difficult to escape the feeling that I will always be an outsider to metal culture, despite having listened to the music for at least 25 years. I

attended a comprehensive school in a small post-industrial town in England, and on reflection, I think that my desire to be a part of the metal subculture could be viewed partly as an attempt to be accepted by my more working-class peers (as well as a fairly instinctive attraction to the music itself). Grayson Perry underlines the importance of class above any other factor in determining taste, even amongst youth cultures: 'A middle-class teenager may still wear a hoodie but it will be a more cotton-rich brand, or they will sport a toned-down version of the fashionable haircut' (Perry, 2013, p. 9). The battle jacket seemed to me a kind of armour, covering up my middle-class timidity. So perhaps as well as just being a question of taste, my choice to listen to metal and dress accordingly might have been a process of assuming an identity, or, to put it another way, cloaking myself in an aegis. I wonder if this function of the battle jacket to protect its wearer psychologically might be mixed into the motivations of other metal fans as well.

In addition, the subject of my research is tied up with some of my formative experiments as an artist. Like many of my peers growing up, I would often engage in repetitive doodles of the artwork and logos of my favourite bands on my school books, rucksack, desks and so on. The artist S. Mark Gubb has alluded to this practice in his artworks featuring heavy metal album covers laser-etched on to school desks (2012). Similarly, some of my earlier attempts at serious painting involved copying images of band artwork on to paper or on to denim or leather jackets. Thus I began to learn about the physical properties and handling of paint, how it flows and pools, how it can be thinned to allow better coverage, how it handles on different types of support. I was quickly struck by the difference between painting on to denim and on to leather. The former is far more uneven as a surface, with a distinct 'tooth' as painters describe it. The porousness of the cotton soaks up the paint, meaning that repeated applications are often necessary to get even coverage. This process of painting on denim was good preparation for painting on canvas, though the two materials might be thought of as ideologically opposed, or at least

as representing, in turn, the traditions of 'folk' and 'high' art as discussed above. To describe a precise line on denim is very difficult, as the line is broken and distorted by the weave. Leather, by contrast, is far smoother. The paint flows more evenly and greater detail is possible. The tendency for leather jackets to be black means that consideration of underpainting is necessary, and the black background affects further colour choices.

From my own experience and from the conversations I have had with other jacket makers, it seems that this, too, is a sphere where hands-on endeavour is often trusted over careful calculation, and in which craft is often self-taught or tacitly shared (Sennett, 2008).[5] In this case, the value of craft could be thought of as having an oppositional relationship to the cycle of industrial production and consumption. The interesting thing in relation to the battle jacket is that the denim and patches are mass produced (mostly) but fans then customise with them, in a sense trying to reclaim the craft process out of the stuff of industrial production (Fiske, 1990, pp. 14–15).

As with technique, so my adolescent interest in metal affected the kind of imagery I wanted to work with. The sci-fi and fantasy art associated with the genre seemed more exciting to me than what I knew of 'art history'. Metallica seemed more immediate than Manet, Sepultura more interesting than Seurat. At school I was made aware of a distinction between high art and popular culture. My teachers tried to dissuade me from referencing the fantasy art genres that I was interested in, and instead to look at 'serious' artists such as those found in the National Gallery in London or the Louvre in Paris. In the intervening years I have found great inspiration in both of these institutions, but I am still sceptical about the force of the

[5] The value of craft is in a sense opposite to the values of industrial production and consumption with their endless repetition. In postmodernity, however, these unique qualities are often assimilated by commercial market structures. Both forces are at play in the practices of battle jacket making, as fans use mass-produced garments and patches, but combine them in personal ways as described by Fiske (1990) in relation to customised denim jeans.

distinction between these two types of culture. This is part of the motivation for my research – to explore how these apparently disparate cultural traditions might be connected, in terms of imagery but also in function. In my art practice the two traditions are connected and overlap – perhaps the overlaps are what really constitute the artwork.

Subculture, folk art and difference

Chapter 3 will consider the significance of battle jackets to those who make and wear them in a subcultural sense. Whilst I am not working primarily as a sociologist or subcultural theorist, it is nonetheless useful to consider battle jackets from a subcultural perspective. Amongst contemporary artists, and to some extent amongst anthropologists, there is growing recognition of the important overlaps between the fields of art practice, anthropology and ethnography (Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz, 2010). Considerable criticism of the artist's appropriation of an ethnographic agenda is levelled by Hal Foster in his essay 'The Artist as Ethnographer' (1996). Foster finds that too often the contemporary artist appropriates the cause of the marginalised 'other' as a vehicle for the advancement of their own career (Foster, 1996, p. 303). Despite sometimes genuine intentions on the part of the artist, Foster argues that their assumption of the ethnographic role 'can promote a presumption of ethnographic authority as much as a questioning of it, an evasion of institutional critique as often as an elaboration of it' (Foster, 1996, p. 306).

In responding to these criticisms, Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz (2010) argue for a fruitful convergence of the disciplines of art and ethnography through a focus on practice (both the practice of the artist and the on-going working practices of the researcher) (Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz, 2010, p. 160). Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz view art practice as an invaluable research tool and as a way of extending the potential of ethnography beyond its traditional limitations. In the space between art and ethnography, new forms of knowledge might be produced (Grimshaw,

Owen and Ravetz, 2010, p. 161). The example is used of a film made by Grimshaw of a piece of performative art produced by Owen. Grimshaw decided to use her camera in a way that echoed the actions undertaken by Owen, 'to reflexively chart the process of making sense/making knowledge in the world irrespective of whether it was considered "art" or "anthropology" ' (Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz, 2010, p. 154). Elsewhere, Grimshaw and Ravetz describe the importance of the relationship between working and making practices as 'a process that depends on a recursive movement between practice and reflection' (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2005, p. 6).

It is in such a spirit that my project uses art practice as a means to explore and enter into dialogue with its subject. The metal subculture is not alien to me, yet neither is it totally familiar. Having grown up as a metal fan, I return to the genre from the position of an artist and academic, seeking to more fully understand the cultural forms that fascinated me as an adolescent and which engage me still. In the interim, the process of making paintings has become for me a way to engage with the world, a practice that mediates between the life of my imagination and the world that I inhabit. Thus the use of painting as a tool to more fully comprehend the expression of the values of the metal fan in the substance of their jacket seems apposite.

My project refers extensively to a series of interviews conducted with battle jacket makers between 2014 and 2016.[6] These semi-structured interviews were conducted at concerts and festivals such as *Sonisphere*, UK, 4–7 July 2014, and *Bloodstock*, UK, 9–11 August 2014, and the *Modern Heavy Metal* academic conference held in Helsinki, 8–12 June 2015. The conversations provide the perspective of subcultural participants and seek to record the meanings they invest in the jackets

[6] The full interview texts can be found in the Appendices.

and the factors considered important in their construction. The style and rationale of these interviews follow the model of prominent participant-focused subcultural researchers such as David Muggleton (2000) and Paul Hodkinson (2002).

Particularly, I am interested in exploring the ways in which the jackets are significant in visually articulating the wearers' subcultural identity (figure 1.8). Part of the definition of a subculture has traditionally been that it sets itself up in opposition to a perceived mainstream or dominant order, or that it defines itself through difference (Hebdige 1979; Thornton 1995). Dick Hebdige was famously critical of resistance that only occurred at the 'superficial' level of appearance and did not change the social situation of the participants (Hebdige, 1979, p. 17). Elizabeth Wilson (2014) has observed that subcultural resistance is difficult today owing to the lack of common language of expression and political positioning. Other recent writers have recognised the complexities of subcultural expression in a postmodern world, with post-subculturalists such as Thornton (1995), Muggleton (2000) and Huq (2006) identifying consumption rather than resistance as the defining quality of many contemporary subcultures (Williams, 2011, p. 98). Studies such as Lauraine Leblanc's (1999) research into female punks underlines the importance of subjective intent as well as outcome in identifying resistance. In my study of battle jackets I will consider the role of intention in the creation of meanings attached to the garments and practices by metal fans.

J. Patrick Williams (2011) describes the meso-level of society as a useful conceptualisation of some subcultures (including metal fans) today. He refers to 'small groups, organizations and social networks, which are held together through communication-interlocks […] resistance is often celebrated in rituals such as music concerts, festivals, or other meetings that are not frequented by outsiders' (Williams, 2011, pp. 100–101). Today's metal fans certainly can be viewed this way, tending to organise themselves via specialist online forums. There are many forums (or

sections thereof) dedicated to the display and discussion of battle jackets (for examples see www.tshirtslayer.com or www.thrashunlimited.com). Communities often exist in 'real' spaces as well, as fans congregate at shows and festivals.

The creator of the battle jacket is certainly a consumer on one level. The jacket and collection of patches have to be purchased (with prized 'original' 1980s patches changing hands for considerable sums), and attending concerts and festivals carries a significant financial cost. However, to view this as a one-way consuming process is to miss the point. The jackets themselves are created by the wearers and still maintain a strong DIY ethos inherited from punk (Hebdige 1979). The curating of patch collections is a highly refined art. Through identifying themselves with bands whose images and lyrics are often extremely controversial,[7] fans consider themselves to be making a statement about their countercultural worldview.

For the contemporary metal fan there is an *intention* of resistance or at least *difference* from a perceived mainstream (Leblanc, 1999) implicit in their involvement in the scene. This is communicated symbolically and physically through the material structures of the battle jacket and the images and text displayed thereon (see chapters 3 and 5).

Summary of chapters

The study will be divided into chapters according to discrete areas of the research, as outlined above. Inevitably there are multiple overlaps

[7] Whilst the most well-known metal bands tend to use artwork and subject matter that is only vaguely menacing (skulls, zombies, fantasy creatures, etc.), more extreme genres such as death metal, black metal and grindcore have been known to use graphic depictions (in both artwork and lyrics) of torture, ritual killings, occult practices, sexual violence and fascist sentiments amongst other things. Bryan A. Bardine (2015, pp. 572–581) examines in detail the violent and horrific content of the lyrics of three extreme bands: *Cannibal Corpse*, *Deicide* and *Morbid Angel*.

between these areas, and certain themes may be discussed in more than one chapter. In selecting where each theme fits most appropriately, I have tried to follow the structure of my practical methodologies. I will seek to show how the traditions of painting and battle jackets are connected through imagery, through materials and through practices of making. I will look at how these connections came about, for example in the influence of images from art history on the artwork used by metal bands and in the origins of metal in working-class folk practices. I will also consider why these connections are important, to demonstrate ways in which individuals seek to establish identity in relation to a wider group or subculture and pointing out how similar motivations might run through apparently disparate areas of visual culture.

Chapter 2 will establish a rationale for creative practice and painting in particular as part of the methodology of this study and will contextualise the series of artworks that I am making for the project.

Chapter 3 will be centred around ideas of authenticity, identity and resistance, and how these are visually communicated through battle jackets as subcultural objects that display contemporary identity. This chapter will also summarise the findings of my research interviews with jacket wearers.

Chapter 4 will look at possible relationships between battle jackets and wider historic and contemporary cultural traditions and making practices, from medieval heraldry to military insignia to twentieth-century subcultures.

Chapter 5 will feature a detailed reading of one particular battle jacket, and use visual analysis to examine how the views and identity of the

wearer in particular and metal subcultures in general are expressed through its construction and appearance. The jacket will also be read

symbolically, looking at the iconography it contains. This chapter will include a discussion of the making of one of my own jackets, charting the decisions made in its construction and the reasons behind them.

Chapter 6 will discuss and analyse a number of the paintings I have made for the final exhibition for this project. These paintings combine a range of references to metal culture as well as related traditions, as discussed in previous chapters. In examining these artworks, the themes developed through the study will be drawn together and elaborated.

Chapter 7 will draw conclusions and summarise findings, presenting the arguments for the importance of the battle jacket in contemporary culture and how understanding of this can be furthered through painting practice.

The appendices include full transcripts of the interviews with battle jacket owners that I have conducted during the research. These will be referred to at various times during the other chapters.

Figure 1.8: A metal fan with customised jacket, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire UK, 09.08.2014. Photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Chapter 2: Painting as a methodology

Introduction

My painting practice investigates the significance of particular objects and images within cultural and subcultural traditions. I am interested in how symbolic associations shift with each iteration in a new context (Saxl, 1957). Thus my work explores the mechanisms of meaning and association that operate within contemporary culture. Postmodern image culture is awash with references to and re-appropriations of visual history, and often the origins of a device might be forgotten or obscured and the symbol and its meaning become detached (Baudrillard, 1988, 1994).

As an artist I investigate instances of such re-appropriation to highlight instances where conflicting meanings overlap or diverge in objects and their depictions. Painting offers a unique tool for this process as it allows direct exploration of its own history and has long been used to explore the mechanisms of representation itself (Gombrich, 1983; Bell, 1999; Grootenboer, 2005).

The renewed interest of contemporary painters in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch and fifteenth-century early Renaissance painting might in part be due to uncertainties about the conditions and future of postmodern capitalism leading to a fascination with the birth of modern capitalist society in the Dutch Golden Age (Schama, 1987). Contemporary British painters such as Ged Quinn, Glenn Brown and Raqib Shaw reference and re-contextualise images and styles from these eras in a self-consciously postmodern way. Quinn's painting *Cake in the Wilderness* (2005) depicts a cherry genoa cake shaped like a model of Spandau Prison (figure 2.1). The artist appropriates the style of Dutch still life painting to present this fictional object, thus visually referencing

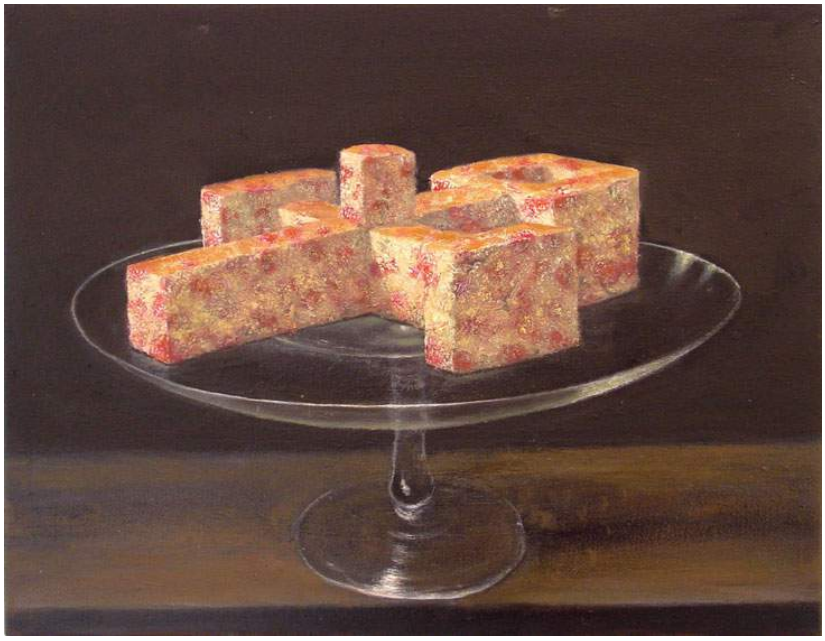

Figure 2.1: Ged Quinn, *Cake in the Wilderness*, 2005, Painting, oil on linen 36 × 46 cm, © the artist. Available at www.saatchigallery.com

the late twentieth-century (retrospective) critical interpretation of historic still life as political allegory (Bryson, 1990). This painting is significant for me in the development of my own work and has led to an on-going interest in Dutch still life and its postmodern interpretations and implications. Many of my recent paintings depict objects from museum collections (some based closely on existing pieces, some elaborated or invented) that are painted in a detailed representational way and usually close to life size. These are rendered in oil paint, using successive layers of glaze and highlight to give a rich, luminous finish that allows an association with Dutch painting. The objects are always presented in isolation, against a plain dark background of indeterminate depth. This background space is ambiguous, both conceptually and pictorially. It might be the darkness of a museum cabinet or suggestive of the shallow spaces of *trompe l'oeil* still life (e.g. Cornelius Gijsbrechts, Juan Sanchez Cotan). As Hanneke Grootenboer writes of the works of Gijsbrechts, Claesz and Heda, 'We […] do not look into a pictorial depth that offers itself to us, but rather the objects are pushed forward by their shallow space and actively confront our gaze' (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 8).

A previous series of paintings I made featured suits of decorative parade armour, based on examples from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries found in museum collections such as the Wallace Collection in London (figures 2.2 and 2.3). In these works I explored the meanings and associations that such armour suggests today. Connotations of power, hierarchy, wealth, aggression, protection and disguise were invoked. The objects were depicted through detailed representational painting, isolated against indeterminate dark grounds. I also found that issues of class and masculinity were central to the discourses of these works.

The armour paintings prompted me to consider other objects that might engage similar ideas, and this resulted in my focus on battle jackets, as these might in some way constitute a contemporary echo of the armour tradition.

On painting as a methodology

The principal function of painting in this study is to bring the battle jacket as a subject into the symbolic and critical space of contemporary painting, opening it up to the references and history of painting as a discipline, as well as allowing my painting practice to be re-contextualised through the lens of heavy metal subculture. Whilst questions might arise regarding the legitimacy of using such a culturally loaded form to reflect upon the vernacular culture of metal fans (these issues will be considered in a later section), nevertheless it is arguable that painting comprises a rich and unique tool with which to map and articulate in detail the nature of battle jacket making as a visual tradition.

Figure 2.2: Tom Cardwell, *The Black Prince*, 2012, painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 100 cm.

Figure 2.3: Tom Cardwell, *With Hope in My Heart*, 2011, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

The unquestionable influence of the advent of photography on painting has been the focus of much discussion that I will not attempt to recount here[8]. It might be argued that contemporary painting, thus freed from the principal function of recording, is today used rather as a conceptual strategy in a multitude of guises. We might say, following Grootenboer (2005), that painting is a way of thinking. It can be used to analyse its subjects in more associative ways, to think laterally. In this way, battle jackets can be perceived and reflected upon both symbolically and descriptively, brought into the semantic space of the studio and gallery with all that this entails. Painting can be used like a microscope to complicate or problematise its subject. As outlined in the introduction, this study will employ painting in several different yet related ways: to observe and record, to transcribe and to re-contextualise, or re-present. As all of these functions can be found in historic still life painting, I will use theoretical readings of still life as a way to demonstrate the workings of my painting practice as a methodology.

Function and interpretation of still life painting

In *What is Painting?* (1999), Julian Bell demonstrates how initial Judaic and Platonic scepticisms about image-making gave way to an Aristotelian endorsement that would set the standard for much of classical and medieval art (Bell, 1999, p. 15). The advent of Romanticism and Modernism, however, paved the way for a complicating of the functions and understandings of painting and identity that remains the topic of much debate today (Bell, 1999, p. 230). Representation persists in contemporary painting, albeit as one amongst several modes.

Historically, critical discussion of still life painting fell broadly into two camps: that which stressed a socio-historical analysis (considering what a work might tell the audience about the world in which it was made) and

[8] See for example Coke (1972), Salaman and Simpson (1998) or Font-Réaulx (2012).

that which allowed for a symbolic interpretation, reading deeper messages and narratives into the configurations of objects represented. Recent criticism, rather than insisting on one reading or another, has to some extent allowed for a synthesis of both (see for example Bryson (1990) or Grootenboer (2005)). In order to demonstrate the importance of painting as a way of comprehending, examining and analysing subjects and objects in the world, I will compare theories of representation and analysis employed by two writers with different critical perspectives: Ernst Gombrich and Norman Bryson.

Gombrich's perception and representation

In *Art and Illusion* (1960, 1983), Gombrich explains representation in relation to the psychology of perception as an on-going process of 'hypothesis and correction' (Bell, 1999, p. 227). We use representation (such as through painting) as a way of continually furthering our understanding of the world.

Gombrich accounts for changes in representational style in painting in terms of codes that can be learned and understood by the viewer. The problem, he tells us, is essentially how to translate 'light into paint' (Gombrich, 1983, pp. 29 ff.). By examining understanding of the physics of vision and models of perception, we can further understand the complexities of pictorial representation, and realise that 'truth' in painting is always relative (Gombrich, 1983, p. 43). The human brain, Gombrich argues, can become attuned to different codes of visual representation. Initially, a new code may seem shocking, but the brain can quickly adapt to it and thereafter it becomes conventional: 'What a painter enquires into is not the nature of the physical world but the nature of our reactions to it' (Gombrich, 1983, p. 44). This ability to adjust to and decipher visual codes is not just confined to the realm of art, but is instilled in the brains of humans (and other creatures) as a survival mechanism, essential for successfully navigating the complexities of the physical world (Gombrich, 1983, p. 46). Thus, for Gombrich, painting is always about using certain

conventions to allow us to enter into a visual fiction, to suspend our disbelief and so to concentrate on a particular aspect of the world (or 'reality') in isolation, to enable us to reflect on aspects of life that we may miss in daily experience. In order for this isolation to be effective, however, we must be able to 'read' the code employed, to understand its conventions and to enter into its illusion. The problem with looking at works from the past is that we can never be totally sure that we are understanding the conventions as a contemporary audience would have done (Gombrich, 1983, p. 51).

Whether or not we agree with all of Gombrich's inferences, it is clear that in his postulation of the problems of representation the painted subject is something very different from that which it represents in the world. The work of the painter is one of translation or codification: to create an effective notation to deal with aspects of the visual in new ways and communicate these to an audience.

Bryson's materialist critique of representation

A self-avowed critic of Gombrich, Norman Bryson viewed the former's system of interpretation sceptically, as resting on assumptions that concealed a privileging of a kind of Western imperialistic worldview (Bryson, 1983, p. xiii). In this view, Gombrich's ultimate emphasis on the role of perception in the understanding of artwork ignores the particularity of historical situations – 'history […] has been bracketed out' (Bryson, 1983, p. xiii). Following Saussure's theory of structural linguistics, Bryson posits an understanding of painting as a system of signs, the meanings of which are constantly changing with each new situation in which works are viewed and contextualised (Bryson, 1983, p. xiv). For Bryson, Gombrich assumes an end of painting in pure sensation that is in fact impossible to isolate from the work of painters (Bell, 1999, p. 229). In contrast, Bryson uses the work of writers such as Foucault, Lacan and Derrida to critique representation in painting from a post-structuralist, materialist perspective.

The still life as material sign

In the introduction to *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (1990), Bryson identifies three factors that can be said to produce still life painting as a genre: the work of criticism, the action of painters and the objects themselves which are represented:

> The objects shown on the tables of seventeenth-century Dutch interiors (pitchers, bowls, goblets, plates, vases and so forth) belong to a further series of artefacts that is not fundamentally discontinuous with the corresponding objects which appear in Pompeian painting. The *things* which occupy still life's attention belong to a long cultural span that goes back beyond modern Europe to antiquity and pre-antiquity. […] Behind the images there stands the culture of artefacts, with its own, independent history (Bryson, 1990, pp. 12–13, emphasis in original).

The rationale for my use of still life painting as a methodology to analyse battle jackets rests precisely on the relationship between the images presented in still life paintings and this 'culture of artefacts' that they relate to. By making paintings of the jackets, I am situating them within this wider discourse, allowing them to be considered in relation to, say, the armour in a Willem Kalf still life, the emblems and miniatures in a *trompe l'oeil* by Gysbrechts or even the detailed robes in a Holbein portrait. As Bryson remarks in an earlier essay, 'The subject is only the present generation of the cultural family. The roots of his or her world in fact travel back into a vast preceding cultural community' (Bryson, 1989, p. 237).

The function of still life painting, to return to Bryson's title, could be thought of as directing our attention to objects (and the social, historical or symbolic discourses and narratives) that might normally be overlooked; to 'bring into view objects that perception normally screens out' (Bryson,

1989, p. 239). In the case of battle jackets, I suggest that these are objects that whilst arresting in design and imagery are usually passed over by the eye of critical culture. As cultural forms or creative works they are marginalised, at best considered as 'interesting' examples of subcultural identity or ironically regarded as bizarre instances of juvenile entertainments persisting into adulthood. Making the jackets the subjects of analysis through painting redresses this imbalance in their cultural categorisation, bringing them into the on-going historical relationships of objects in paintings.

Class and status in still life

At the root of the marginalisation of battle jackets and the metal culture they represent is an elitist approach to culture that tends to classify as art that which represents and reflects the interests of the middle and upper classes (Berger, 1972). The demographic of heavy metal musicians and fans has historically been largely male, white and working class (Weinstein, 2000, 2007), a cultural group that has often been overlooked in recent scholarship (Hickam, 2014, p. 16). With this in mind, still life painting offers a unique vehicle for reassessing the cultural importance of battle jackets, as it has often been used to make explicit differences in social relations. As Bryson says, 'Still life cannot escape the phenomenon of class: the table is an exact barometer of status and wealth' (Bryson, 1989, p. 245), and again:

> The visual subject relates to the scene not only in terms of group exclusion or inclusion, but through a worldly knowledge that knows what it is to interpret the nuanced coding of a material environment. The subject is therefore an actual social agent whose experience of 'humanity' is of a field orchestrated into hierarchies of wealth, status, and aesthetic culture (Bryson, 1989, p. 246).

The battle jacket is a marker of identity, used to display allegiance to the metal subculture. As such it visually functions to locate its wearer in a precise position within social hierarchies. The jacket as an object within painting can function as this classed subject but, through the dialogue with historic still life, can be opened to the possibility of being considered within the discourses of painting history. Conversely, by 'assimilating' the subject of mass culture, the discourses and practices of high culture seek to reaffirm their relevance and apparent inclusivity.

Grootenboer's 'painting as thinking' and the 'anti-painting' of *trompe l'oeil*

> Dutch still life calls for a mode of looking that fundamentally differs from conventional methods originally designed for other genres (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 31).

In *The Rhetoric of Perspective* (2005) Hanneke Grootenboer argues that far from being a simple genre of mundane representation, still life painting is a philosophically complex system that uses the mechanisms of representation and illusion to reflect on painting, vision and the nature of being itself. At one time still life works were viewed as a less important subgenre of painting, known as *parerga* or 'by-works' (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 31). As such they were considered not to be open to symbolic interpretation, but more recently it has been recognised that such an attitude is overly literal. Grootenboer cites Derrida's discussion of truth in painting, which is precipitated by a line written by Cézanne to Emile Bernard: 'I owe you the truth in painting, and I will tell you' (Derrida in Grootenboer, 2005, p. 33). Derrida claims that truth can be *either* embodied *or* represented in painting. In the latter case he identifies four complex possibilities for the ways that painting can articulate truth in an image: a presentation of a presentation; a presentation of a representation; a representation of a presentation; or a representation of a representation (Derrida in Grootenboer, 2005, p. 34). The exact ways in

which these modes might be identified in particular works is not always clear, but what is apparent is that Derrida uncovers a high level of complexity regarding representations in painting.[9] The painted image of an object is very far from being the same as the thing itself. Grootenboer goes on to argue that truth in painting is always bound up with depth, since depth creates illusion via perspectival tricks. In certain still life paintings, such as those of Pieter Claesz, a shallow or indeterminate space confounds the usual conventions of perspectival depth, with complex ramifications for ideas of being as regards the viewer and the painting subject.

Trompe l'oeil painting, on the other hand, is the opposite of representation, claims Grootenboer (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 45). The illusionism of work such as Samuel Van Hoogstraten's *Feigned Letter Rack* (1670) aims to trick the eye rather than engage it in a knowing system of portrayed depth. As such it is a kind of 'anti-painting', to use Jean Baudrillard's phrase (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 53). For Baudrillard, the objects depicted in *trompe l'oeil* works are 'empty signs' (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 54) which create a hollowing or lack through their near-impossible closeness to reality in appearance. Once again, such interpretation underscores how fundamentally different painted objects are from the 'original' things they portray or represent. Baudrillard also comments on the flat, featureless backgrounds and unnatural lighting of many *trompe l'oeil* paintings. These he likens to voids created by 'the absence of that figurative hierarchy that gives order to the elements of a picture as it does for the political order' (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 54). The hyper-real depiction of objects on plain backgrounds lends them a symbolic resonance (even if one of lack) that Baudrillard likens to surrealist compositions.

[9] The works I am making in the course of this project fall into the latter two categories that Derrida outlines: representations of presentations or representations of representations. In documenting and transcribing the jackets through painting I am working from photographic images as well as jackets themselves. In a sense the jackets already contain several orders of representation, removed from their referents through reproduction on album covers and then on embroidered or screen-printed patches.

Whilst in my own paintings of battle jackets I am not primarily concerned with a complete *trompe l'oeil* effect, reference is made to this genre through the use of flat or indeterminate grounds and through a consistent level of detail in rendering. The painted surface does not function in a gestural or physical way, but instead utilises a flatness that to some extent disguises the materiality of the paint. For me, the ability of painting to re-present a subject in a new way through paint is part of what makes it an enduring medium, and thus the 'agenda' of the *trompe l'oeil* is somewhat different from my own, much as I might admire its technical achievement.

Symbolic lack in the paintings of Willem Kalf

Following Baudrillard, Bryson suggests that Willem Kalf's paintings of armour and other crafted objects (figure 2.4) alter the audience's relationship with the originals – the painting of a crafted object is so masterful that it even outstrips the object itself, creating a symbolic lack in the original object:

> If these objects are already masterpieces, why should they be repeated in a second masterpiece? The duplication of elaborative work begins to point to a process that is as endless as it is without reason; the replica indicates a deficiency in the original object that will not be remedied by the supplement, but contaminates it and so to speak hollows it out (Bryson, 1990, p. 126).

Bryson argues that the virtuosity employed by the painter in rendering these fantastically detailed objects in hyper-real detailed representation undermines the uniqueness and masterful craft of the originals. If still life painting can function in this sense to deplete its subject through representation, can it in other wise be found to also have an ennobling capacity, to raise up that normally considered as humble? Following Bryson's analysis of Chardin (1989), I argue that it can. The battle jacket

brought into the sphere of still life painting can be reconsidered through paint; it can take its place in a history of human culture previously shut off to it through elitist cultural boundaries.

The idea of hollowness in Bryson's analysis is also interesting on another level. As well as a conceptual hollowing, we might think of the hollowness of the suits of armour and battle jackets in my own paintings: the body is absent from both; the objects are separated from their subjects. This factor reinforces the effect of the plain backgrounds, to further isolate and abstract these garments as objects and move them into a sort of conceptual space. Being removed from the body and from a particular social setting, they are also removed from the specificities of time and place. Instead, they exist in the space of painting, which might be thought of as a kind of non-space or space of potentiality, a symbolic or imaginary space.

Implications for my own painting

In these brief outlines of some recent theoretical readings of still life painting I have hoped to indicate some of the ways in which this genre underpins my own painting practice, even if I am not making still life paintings *per se*. Central to the functioning of my work is the idea that the painted representation (or re-presentation) of an object encountered in the world is conceptually different from its referent. Whilst Gombrich and Bryson differ significantly in their theories of the understanding of representation in painting, I have demonstrated that for both of them the painted image of a thing is very far from being the same as the thing in itself. For Gombrich, the painted image corresponds to an arrangement of coded data that enables the eye of the viewer to enter into an illusion that calls forth an impression of the thing itself. The problem of painting then becomes chiefly concerned with how to most successfully or 'accurately' create the most effective representation.

For Bryson, the painted image of a thing becomes a symbol or signifier, which can have no authoritative reading, but instead communicates differently to every viewer in every situation owing to the specificity of historical context. In Baudrillard's terms, the painted object can even be one that opposes meaning, that contains 'symbolic lack' through too perfectly reflecting an object that was already unique.

All this is to say that painting offers a unique way of viewing objects. The process of painting can elevate and isolate objects, bringing them into a symbolic space that allows them to bear a level of meaning and consideration that might bypass them were they to remain as objects in the world. Both in the act of painting and in the act of beholding, the process of representing a thing allows us to think about it differently. In making paintings of battle jackets, I am bringing them into the domain of the still life in the broadest sense, considering them not just as things but as cultural symbols that warrant close consideration.

My choice of the flat background also owes much to still life tradition. Beginning perhaps with the *parerga* of Pompeian mosaics, the flat or shallow background has long been used to isolate and present humble objects for prolonged consideration. The breakfasts of Claesz with their subdued grey backdrops and the flat grounds of *trompe l'oeil* furnish further examples. As Baudrillard comments, such grounds (as in surrealist painting) allow these spaces to take on a symbolic aspect (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 54).

In the following section I will consider the work of several historic and contemporary artists as examples to help contextualise my own practice and further illustrate the functions of painting that I am employing in this project.

Figure 2.4: Willem Kalf, *Still Life with a Chinese Bowl, a Nautilus Cup and other Objects*, 1662, painting, oil on canvas, 79 × 67 cm, © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. Available at www.wga.hu

Depiction of objects in the work of Cornelius Gijsbrechts and Samuel Van Hoogstraten

As has been observed through Baudrillard's and Grootenboer's readings of *trompe l'oeil*, works in this genre might be considered to reach beyond representation into a complex system of illusion that functions differently from other still life painting. For the present purpose, however, *trompe l'oeil* will be included within the definition of still life, as it is concerned with representing combinations of objects that can be considered to have symbolic as well as just descriptive significance (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 43). In the work of painters such as Cornelius Gijsbrechts and Samuel Van Hoogstraten, varieties of small-scale objects, such as those in the contemporary letter racks that characterise this genre, are grouped

together on flat or shallow backgrounds. The objects represented are often the products of human labour and craft rather than natural forms (although they often feature natural materials such as wood or shells). Many of the things represented feature images or text, for example handwritten letters, printed bills, engravings and painted miniatures. In Gijsbrechts' 1670 painting *Trompe l'Oeil with Trumpet, Celestial Globe and Proclamation by Frederik III* (figure 2.5) we see a dense arrangement of objects including a Turkish rug, patterned fabrics, navigation instruments (including the celestial globe of the title), coral and shells, ink wells, an hour glass, a wax seal, illustrated texts and maps, a trumpet, carpentry tools and in central position the king's proclamation document. As well as alluding to riches, arts, learning and travel, this painting is interpreted as being a tribute to King Frederik III (Koester, 1999, p. 28). Thus it is not just the individual objects portrayed but their combination and configuration that communicate a narrative concerning their subject. The act of painting is used to enclose and collect these objects, embedding them within the symbolic, flattened space of the *trompe l'oeil* (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 54).

Another of Gijsbrechts' paintings, *Trompe l'Oeil with Studio Wall and Vanitas Still Life* (1668) (figure 2.6), presents a more sparse composition that contrives to show a section of the artist's studio wall. In the centre of the painting we see a canvas on which is painted a *vanitas* still life, with one corner unhitched from the stretcher, the implement used to do this still protruding from the back of the support. By the inverted logic of representation employed by *trompe l'oeil* works, the very act of explicitly representing the mechanics of the painting's construction serves to heighten the illusion, inviting the viewer into a false confidence. On the shelf below the canvas sit a paint container and a bundle of brushes, whilst a palette and bottle of oil and a rag hang from pegs on its edge. On

Figure 2.5: Cornelius Gijsbrects, *Trompe l'Oeil with Trumpet, Celestial Globe and Proclamation by Frederik III*, 1670, painting, oil on canvas, 132 × 201 cm, © National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen. Available at www.smk.dk

Figure 2.6: Cornelius Gijsbrects, *Trompe l'Oeil with Studio Wall and Vanitas Still Life*, 1668, painting, oil on canvas, 152 × 118 cm © National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen. Available at www.smk.dk

the left of the painting are three portrait miniatures, one unfinished so that we only see the background. The *vanitas* painting itself features a recessive niche in which sits a presentation of objects that can be read as symbolising the brevity of earthly life, along with the hope of resurrection (alluded to by the wreath of corn stalks around the skull) (Koester, 1999, p. 35). The uppermost miniature shows Emperor Leopold I, whilst the bottom could perhaps be a self-portrait by Gijsbrechts (Koester, 1999, p. 35).

These collections of existing visual objects represented in paint bring the individual items into a sort of dialogue with one another, creating meanings that would not have existed were they displayed independently. As Norman Bryson argues in relation to the flower paintings of Ambrosius Boschaert (amongst others), such paintings can function like *wunderkammen* or cabinets of curiosities 'whose function was to produce knowledge by arraying objects in a taxonomic or diagrammatic space designed to reveal variation against the background of underlying structure or type' (Bryson, 1990, p. 107).

Battle jackets also function as collections of objects (patches, prints, paintings, studs) which are arranged in specific configurations by the creator. Through representing these collections in paint, I am presenting them as a type of *wunderkammer* or *kunstkammer* ('art cabinet'), arraying the individual patches against the underlying structures of both the jackets themselves and the subcultural taste categories of metal. A layering of genres thus begins to occur – the meeting of *vanitas* and *trompe l'oeil* in representation, the painting of the jacket echoing the historic genre of the painting of the *wunderkammer* or *kunstkammer*.

Writing about Samuel Van Hoogstraten's *Feigned Letter Rack Painting* (c.1670) (figure 2.7), Celeste Brusati argues that the collection of objects (including books, combs, letters and medallions) can be viewed as a self-portrait by the artist (Brusati, 1995, p. 167). In different ways, the objects represent Van Hoogstraten's honours and accomplishments, and thus add

up to a sort of symbolic self-promotion. The *trompe l'oeil* arrangement acts not just as a visual trick but also as a more serious type of power narrative, in this case in the service of the artist's own PR, or in the first example by Gijsbrechts discussed above as propaganda for a monarch.

I argue that battle jackets can similarly be read as portraits of their creators – displaying identity through the personal selection and arrangement of patch collections that signify very particular taste choices and allegiances within the subculture of metal. To an outsider all battle jackets may look alike. To the metal fan, however, significant differences in genre and symbolic association separate one patch, logo or album cover artwork from another. To borrow Gombrich's analogy, in order to interpret them we need to understand the lexicon of codes that govern the meaning of the artwork and logos displayed on the patches, and how these meanings are affected by particular juxtapositions. One of the main functions of painting as a methodology in this study is to analyse and interpret these codes and their meanings.

Appropriation in the work of Banks Violette

Appropriation as a strategy is widespread in contemporary art. The re-presentation of existing imagery in unfamiliar media or scale is often used to bring a new perspective to the content. It could also be argued that such work exploits the postmodern disconnection between signifier and signified which Jean Baudrillard argues results in the simulacrum – a sign without referent (1994). With the ubiquity of photographic and digital imagery in contemporary culture, a significant number of artists choose to use 'traditional' hand-rendered processes to replicate lens-based imagery in a subversion of the mechanical image.

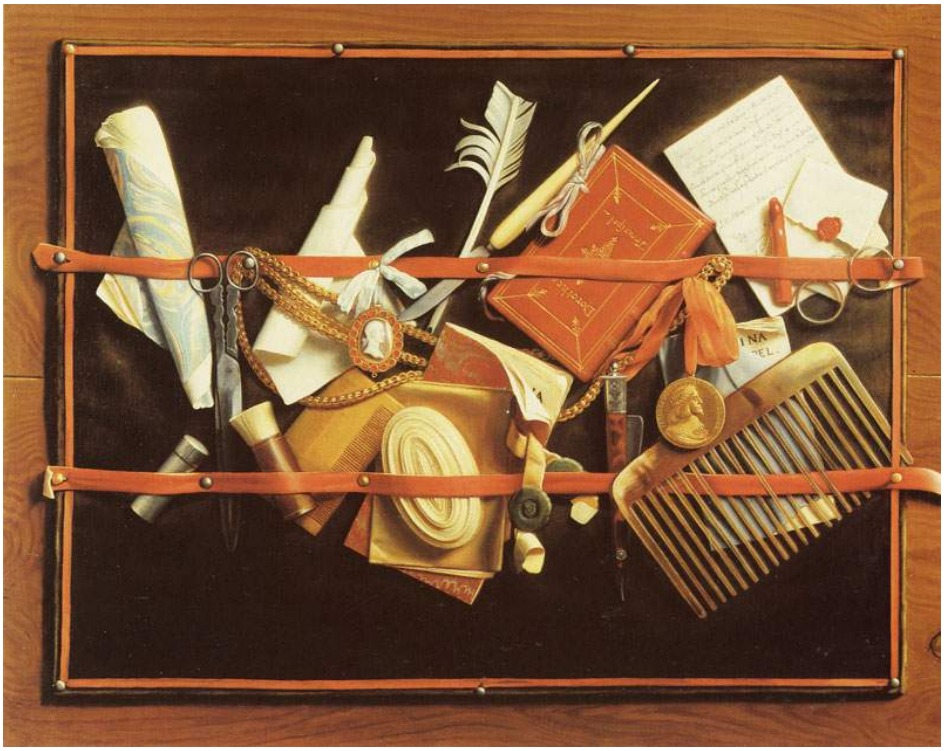

Figure 2.7: Samuel Van Hoogstraten, *Feigned Letter Rack Painting*, c.1666-1668, painting, oil on canvas, 63 × 79 cm, Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. Available at www.wga.hu

Figure 2.8: Banks Violette, *Not Yet Titled (dwg09_02)*, 2008, drawing, graphite on paper, 42 × 35 inches, Team Gallery, New York, USA. Available at arttattler.com

Well-known examples include the photo paintings of Gerhard Richter and Jeff Koons, Vija Celmins' pencil drawings of large-scale photographs and the detailed hand-carved wooden objects made by Ricky Swallow. Significantly, the new version of the image transcribed in different media is fundamentally different from the original in substance and meaning. Richter said of painting from photographs that 'the photograph provokes horror, and the painting – with the same motif – something more like grief' (Richter in Momim, 2005, p. 12).

Banks Violette uses such techniques in his multi-faceted practice that explores darker aspects of popular and metal culture. For his 2009 exhibition at Team Gallery in New York (Violette, 2009), Violette presented a collection of detailed pencil drawings based on second-hand photographic references, some containing several generations of visual quotation. The drawing *Not Yet Titled (dwg_09_02)* (2008a) (figure 2.8) references a cover image by the legendary punk band The Misfits, depicting a hooded face painted to look like a skull. The Misfits cover itself references a 1946 horror film, *Crimson Ghost.* Violette's drawing is removed by several stages from this original image, and the act of careful hand rendering in graphite further underlines the tenuous nature of what is being depicted. Whilst the image is clearly based on a photograph, the handmade marks in the resulting artwork show that the latter is of a different order to its referent. As one review of the show put it, in Violette's drawings 'images struggle to the surface from a dense mass of graphite applied sometimes laboriously and vigorously; sometimes with a gentle and persuasive sensitivity' (*Banks Violette's Exploration of Redemption, Faith, Death & Transformation*, 2009).

Another drawing in the series *Not Yet Titled (dwg_09_04)* (2008b) shows a blurred, partly rasterised image of Christ in his passion, crowned with thorns. In this instance Christ is played by the actor Bela Lugosi, better known for his numerous horror films. Once more several orders or 'generations' of reference are used to distance the subject matter of the

image from any concrete meaning. The endless reproduction of such images in printed and screen media is invoked, inviting questions about the relationship between image and meaning. Violette has said that he uses 'images that are fundamentally dead or bankrupt, overused or over-determined, to the point that they don't function anymore' (Honigman, 2004). Earlier drawings by Violette include *Motorhead (inverted)* (2003) (figure 2.9) and *Misfits (X-Ray)* (2002), both based on well-known album covers by the respective bands. The artist's interest in metal culture and iconography is well documented (Bauer, 2013), and in these works the relationship between the familiar imagery of metal music and perceived meaning is explored through appropriating the images and transcribing them through drawing. Violette is interested in questioning the narratives that exist around heavy metal, particularly its connection to sensationalist and

Figure 2.9: Banks Violette, *Motorhead (inverted)*, 2003, drawing, graphite on paper, 102.8 × 152.4 cm, Team Gallery, New York, USA. Available at: www.artnet.com

controversial events by tabloid media. Another solo exhibition, *Arroyo Grande 7.22.95* (Violette, 2002a), took its theme from the murder of a teenage girl by three youths in California. The nightmarish crime was reportedly inspired by the perpetrators' interest in the metal band Slayer.

News reports spun this as a ritualistic metal killing.[10] One of the works in the show was a large oil painting featuring three stylised skulls intersected by sword blades, based on a famous Slayer album cover and titled *gone (Joseph Fiorella, Jacob Delashmutt, Royce Casey)* (2001–2002) (figure 2.10). Referring to this work in a 2004 interview for Artnet, Violette said: 'I see a non-narrative and build a narrative out of it, like with these minor, fundamentally goofy Slayer album covers, that I bring up to the scale of 19th century panorama paintings or theatrical backdrops. They then become the stage on which this action is conducted' (Honigman, 2004).

In Violette's practice the iconic images associated with heavy metal – images that can become over-familiar through repetition – are made strange through changes to media and transcription. Other works refer to metal through metaphor or association, referring to themes or structures of narrative obliquely and elliptically. Taken together, the works function poetically rather than didactically, an approach that is ostensibly at odds with the normal modus operandi of metal culture, which is famous for being anything but subtle. Banks Violette's work successfully repositions the imagery of metal album covers within the gallery context, opening it up to the discourses of painting tradition (as hinted at by the artist in his reference to '19th century panorama paintings' (Honigman, 2004)). Through the re-presentation of existing imagery in different media (hand-rendered graphite, oil paint, etc.) and different scales, the messages and narratives associated with the original subject can be re-assessed, re-contextualised or expanded upon; such is the work of the artist.

[10] For a discussion of the 'moral panics' created around metal fans by the media in relation to sensational crimes, see Williams, 2011, pp. 113–121.

Figure 2.10: Banks Violette, *gone (Joseph Fiorella, Jacob Delashmutt, Royce Casey)*, 2001 – 2002, painting, oil on canvas, 76 × 204 inches, Team Gallery, New York, USA. Available at www.teamgal.com

Through re-presenting the imagery of battle jackets in paint, I will similarly reposition and reassess them, examining their narratives and meanings through the lens of painting practice and historic tradition. At the same time, I will use the battle jacket as a device to reposition and reassess painting practice.

Representation and transcription in historical and contemporary painting

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of painting as a tool to transcribe and document has a long history. A timeline might be plotted that includes the court portraits of Hans Holbein and William Larkin, the society portraits of Thomas Gainsborough, the mythical subjects of the Pre Raphaelites and the pop art portraits by Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton, which included details of contemporary imagery and clothing.

Blake's *Self Portrait with Badges* (1961) (figure 2.11) can be seen as showing a direct antecedent of the battle jacket. David Hancock's paintings examine the details of subcultural display amongst goth teenagers (Hancock, 2001b) (figure 2.12), and Kehinde Wiley draws on European portrait tradition in his contemporary paintings of African Americans that are resplendent in patterned clothing and backdrops (figure 2.13).

In these few examples (and numerous others might equally be cited) it is clear that several significant functions of representation are being employed: transcription, recording, decoding, juxtaposition (with other elements), recontextualisation and visual analysis. These functions are important in my own practice and in my use of painting to represent battle jackets. In the cases of Violette, Blake, Hancock and Wiley, the artists are using drawing or painting to transcribe and represent aspects of contemporary

Figure 2.11: Peter Blake, *Self Portrait with Badges*, 1961, painting, oil on board, 174 × 122 cm, © Tate, London [2017]. Available at www.tate.org.uk

mass culture through imagery, and in the latter three examples through display in clothing. These works not only record, but also add something to the subject matter they represent. We might call what is added the artist's viewpoint, or we might think of it as a value that is added through the change of media into graphite or paint. Additionally, a symbolic value is added as the subject is now placed into the conceptual space of art; we are invited to contemplate it on a new level.

Whether or not this transcription is successful depends perhaps on whether we understand the codes the artist is employing, and how close we are to the context in which the work was made. Knowledge of the appropriation of baseball clothing in North American hip hop culture (and the significance of particular teams) might help us understand Wiley's painting *The Three Graces* (Wiley, 2005) (figure 2.13), and familiarity with the style choices of teenage goths in Manchester in the early 2000s will enable us to get more from Hancock's *Beautiful People* series (Hancock, 2001b) (figure 2.12). But awareness of developments in figurative painting since 1700 will give us a different perspective, not just on the subject matter but on the status of the works as paintings within that tradition. Equally, an analysis of battle jackets within the context of still life painting allows us to compare these objects as visual documents of a specific time, place and culture, but also to connect them to Bryson's 'culture of artefacts' (1990, p. 13) that reaches across time.

Summary

Using a post-structuralist approach to interpretation of historical still life painting has enabled thinkers such as Norman Bryson, Jean Baudrillard and Hanneke Grootenboer to develop a way of reading these paintings as interfaces within complex webs of material, economic, political and cultural forces. Rather than focussing on what a painting might have meant to its contemporary audience, such an approach harnesses the symbolic

potential of these works to exist in a continually evolving chain of meanings which shift with each new viewing

Figure 2.12: David Hancock, *Something Beautiful Something Free # 27 (U look well intresting)*, 2001, painting, acrylic on canvas, 102 × 48 inches, collection of the artist. Available at www.a-n.co.uk

Figure 2.13: Kehinde Wiley, *Three Graces*, 2005, painting, oil and enamel on canvas, 183 × 423 cm, Hort Family Collection, courtesy Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles, California. © Kehinde Wiley. Available at www.npg.si.edu

and (re)contextualisation. When placed alongside more recent works, new ways of reading each come to light. Within recent and contemporary painting, strategies of appropriation of mass cultural subject matter are significant. Artists such as Banks Violette, David Hancock and Ricky Swallow have all used the imagery of heavy metal culture, repositioning it within a gallery context, transcribing it in new media (paint, graphite, wood) and allowing comparisons back and forth between art history and metal subculture.

Using such a strategy in my treatment of the battle jacket as subject matter allows me to exploit similar comparisons. As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5, these juxtapositions through painting facilitate new readings not only of battle jackets (within the symbolic space of historical and contemporary painting) but also reciprocally of the canon of art history through the lens of metal subculture. Before this, however, the next chapter will explore the subcultural significance of battle jackets to the fans that make and wear them.

Chapter 3: The importance of battle jackets within metal subcultures

Introduction

This chapter will consider the significance and meaning of battle jackets within the context of metal subcultures. Beginning with a summary of the history of the practice amongst metal fans of customising jackets, ideas of personal subcultural identity, authenticity and resistance (and their visual communication) will be used to more fully understand the importance of the jackets to those that make and wear them. Consideration of the importance of identity in jacket making will be given in terms of David Muggleton's concept of 'distinctive individuality', whilst Sarah Thornton's 'subcultural capital' and ideas of 'insider' hierarchies will be referred to in the discussion of authenticity. The final section will survey some of the practices of customisation used by fans in constructing jackets to consider their visual and material aspects using Richard Sennett's 'material consciousness'. Following this, the term 'material individuality' is proposed to describe jacket practices through bridging the various theories discussed.

These observations are drawn from interviews with jacket wearers that I conducted between July 2014 and June 2015 at *Sonisphere* and *Bloodstock* music festivals, UK, and at the *Modern Heavy Metal* conference, 2015, Helsinki, Finland, as well as from my own experiences within metal subculture.

The meanings of the jackets are considered in relation to functions of symbolism, visual codes of authenticity, common traits of jackets and how these link fans together, depictions of resistance and practices of customisation. I will consider how each of these concepts is expressed visually and materially through the jacket itself.

Some notes on the interviews

The primary methodology in this study is painting, as outlined in the previous chapter. Painting is used to describe and analyse battle jackets, and to consider their relationship to other cultural forms and traditions.

As a secondary methodology, jacket makers were interviewed as an additional way of gathering insights into the meanings contained by the jackets for the fans themselves.

Interviews were conducted at two heavy metal festivals in the UK in 2014, and at one academic conference in Finland in 2015. The *Sonisphere* festival took place from 4 to 6 July 2014 at Knebworth Park, Hertfordshire, UK, and is the largest metal-specific festival in the UK, with a roster that includes more mainstream metal bands (Metallica and Iron Maiden headlined in 2014) and so draws a wide spectrum of fans. *Bloodstock* took place from 8 to 10 August 2014 at Catton Park, Derbyshire, UK. *Bloodstock* is a smaller festival which features more specialised or 'underground' acts that attract loyal followings but are often not well known outside of the discourses of metal media and subculture (headliners in 2014 included Down, Dimmu Borgir and Megadeth). The *Modern Heavy Metal* conference was an academic research conference that took place in Helsinki, Finland, from 8 to 12 June 2015. Whilst most (though not all) attendees were academics, many were also serious metal fans and some wore their battle jackets and band T-shirts to the conference.

In total I conducted nine interviews with eleven respondents, seven of whom were male and four female. Interview duration ranged from around five minutes to over 40 minutes, depending on how much time respondents had to spare, and how much they had to say. Interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. All interviewees were informed of the purposes of the research and signed consent forms. Additionally, I spoke to many more jacket wearers in short conversations that were not recorded as interviews. Whilst I cannot reference these opinions directly,

they have contributed to my overall conclusions. Interview subjects were selected in the first instance because they were wearing battle jackets. Initially I approached subjects and asked to photograph them with their jackets. If they agreed to being photographed, and seemed open to talk, I then asked them to participate in the interviews. The majority of those I asked to interview accepted, although some did not want to take part. The interviews were semi-structured in nature. I had a number of questions in mind, which I asked in different ways according to how each conversation developed. I attempted to allow interviewees to follow their own trains of thought and to bring up issues they considered important. I would use my questions as and when necessary to keep the conversation moving. Generally, I began the interviews by asking respondents to tell me about their jackets. Other typical questions included: 'How did you select which bands to feature on your jacket?', 'How long have you been making your jacket, and do you sew it yourself?' and 'How important is your jacket in displaying your identity?'
Interviewees took part voluntarily and were not paid to do so.

Between the oral and the visual, subjects and objects

The use of these interviews as a way of understanding the significance of battle jackets to metal fans owes much to the increasing use of oral histories in art and design research. Whilst my interviews were perhaps slightly more structured than a pure oral history approach would allow, they were essentially conversational in nature, with subjects allowed to follow their own trains of thought. The interview settings, at metal concerts and festivals, encouraged an ease of conversation with my respondents, and my own perspective as a genuine (if somewhat lapsed) metal fan aided this informality, meaning that I was able to develop some rapport with most. Emphasising the importance of an oral history approach, Linda Sandino contrasts this with the traditional social science interview method:

> Interviews have now become a standard method for eliciting information about objects as diverse as fridge magnets, cross-stitching, Second-hand Cultures and laptops. Oral history, on the other hand, focuses on people in order to understand them as subjects in the socio-historical contexts of the immediate past or the present (Sandino, 2006, p. 275).

Thus the perspective of the metal fan as subject facilitates a deeper understanding of the battle jacket as object. Conversely, the visual investigation of the jackets as objects in their own right brings an additional dimension to the understanding of the metal fan, their motivations and subcultural identity. This investigation of both subject as creator and the objects they create offers a multi-dimensional perspective that is in keeping with the investigations of art practice. Thus Matthew Partington emphasises 'the degree to which conventional, textually and aurally presented oral histories omit the visual element of the spoken word and thus present a denuded version of what took place' (Partington, 2006, p. 333).

The possibilities for art practice to 'mediate' between subjects and objects in this way underline the importance of such an interdisciplinary approach. Whilst such practices may invite criticism from either side (the social scientists lamenting that the methodologies are insufficiently rigorous, the artists complaining that creative practice suffers from the imposition of such a methodological system), it is hoped that the result might allow the opening up of a useful space between the two. Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz write:

> By patiently attending to what happens when art and anthropology come together, we encounter a form of knowledge that we often fail to recognize or interpret in some primary way – that is, craft knowledge built from the bringing together of differences or the

> migration of skills from one context to another (Grimshaw, Owen and Ravetz, 2010, p. 161).

In a sense, this conflation of art practice and interview methodology, of object and subject, only multiplies and complicates the perspectives at stake. I navigate the project as an artist, but I also become an interviewer and I cannot help but be a fan. The interview subjects are presented primarily as metal fans, but they are also craftspeople and perhaps artists themselves. Thus the roles played by any of us might almost be interchangeable, except that I happen to be the one charged with fulfilling the project in hand. Painting, of course, is historically an art of imitation, but in imitating, knowledge is brought forth (Bryson, 1990). So, too, the interview is a kind of imitation, an imitation through language. In both cases something is abstracted in the copy or reiteration; as Michael Taussig says, 'in imitating, we will find distance from the imitated' (Taussig, 1993, p. xix). Perhaps as an artist I find distance from my previous position as a fan, allowing a new knowledge to emerge in the space between paintings and interviews, objects and subjects.

The history of battle jackets

In the widest sense, a charting of the designs of insignias and customisation of clothing to display affiliations might lead back to medieval heraldry or even earlier. In chapter 4 a selection of these related traditions will be explored. Visually, battle jackets are closely related to different variations of biker jackets used by motorcycle clubs and recreational riders. Alford and Ferriss (2007, p. 189) summarise the history of the biker jacket. In biker culture, a number of different significant traditions of jacket customisation exist. Most well-known are probably the emblazoned jackets of the 'patch clubs' (see figure 3.1), of which the Hells Angels are the most famous example (Alford and Ferriss, 2007, pp. 86–87). These 'outlaw' clubs (so called because of their lack of affiliation with the American Motorcycle Association and its international counterparts (Dulaney, 2005))

observe strict order in the decoration of their jackets, which are used to identify club affiliation, geographic territory, and individual role and rank within the group (Vick, 2015, p. 10). Such clubs formed after World War II,[11] and the style of customised jackets they use probably dates from that time or slightly later (Vick, 2015, p. 10). Other traditions of customisation include the elaborate embroidery of the Japanese Bosozoku groups (Alford and Ferris, 2007, pp. 72–78) and the more idiosyncratically decorated jackets of the Rockers and Ton-up boys that emerged in the 1950s in Britain (Stuart, 1987; Friedrichs, 2012). Following in the vein of the latter groups, many recreational bikers choose to customise their jackets with 'run patches' that commemorate specific rides and meetings.

The crossover between motorcycle culture and heavy metal is well documented. Deena Weinstein traces the origins of the subcultural style of metal emerging out of the 1960s countercultures of hippies and bikers (Weinstein, 2000, p. 100). A number of fans I have met are also bikers and combine both types of iconography on their jackets (see figure 3.2). It is difficult to say precisely when metal fans first began to customise their jackets to reflect musical tastes, as much of the history of early metal fandom was recorded anecdotally, if at all (Wiederhorn and Turman, 2013). Heavy metal as a musical genre is considered to have started somewhere between 1969 and 1972 and to have been well established by the mid 1970s (Weinstein, 2000, p. 14). From a number of subjects interviewed, as well as jackets in

[11] *Hell's Angels* was the title of a 1930 film directed by Howard Hughes and Edmund Goulding. It was also the name adopted by members of the 3rd Squadron of the 1st American Volunteer Group 'Flying Tigers' inspired by the *Hell's Angels* film, re-released in 1940 (*Hells Angels, (disambiguation)* 2013). According to Wikipedia, the first Hells Angels club was founded in 1948 (*Hells Angels*, 2015).

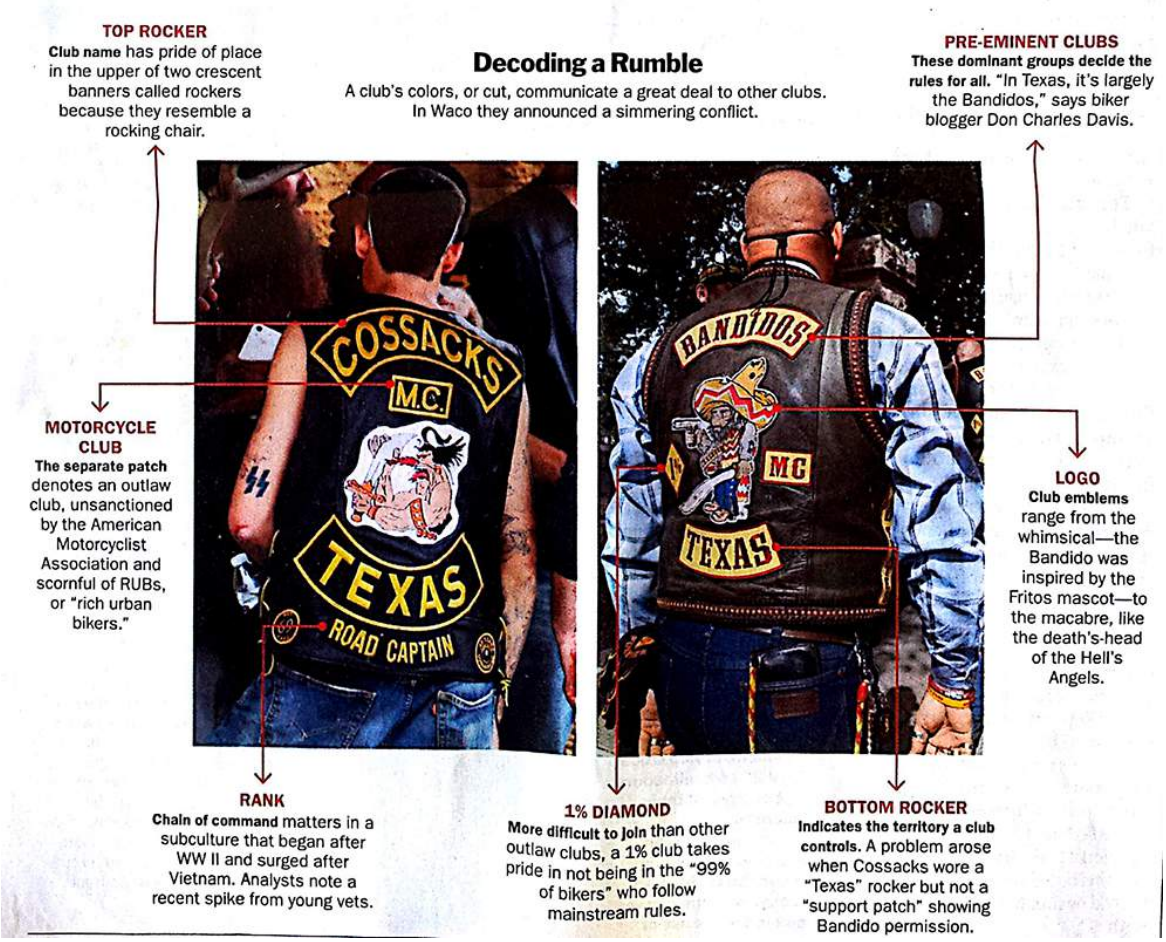

Figure 3.1: Motorcycle club jacket diagram, 'Decoding A Rumble', *Time* magazine, 1 June 2015, p. 10, illustration.

museum collections (such as that of the M Shed museum in Bristol), it can be estimated that by the late 1970s forms of customised jackets were being worn by metal fans. Pete, a band member and metal fan, began making battle jackets in the early 1980s and identifies the connection with motorcycle culture explicitly:

> We're talking about 1984 [when] I started doing this. There was a lot of patch jackets around, but more of them was coming from the bike side of things. I used to go underage drinking in this metal pub in Eastcote, called the Clay Pigeon […]. So this was the ultimate metal club, run by the guy who basically discovered Iron Maiden.

> And we all went down there and it was just wall-to-wall bikes and jackets (Pete, 2014, p. 1, grammar unchanged).

Another fan I interviewed also refers to the origin of battle jacket making in biker culture: 'I know it started with biker gangs, say the Hells Angels […] they probably started it with their patches, and it probably just came into this community' (Chris, 2014, p. 4, grammar unchanged).

Early battle jackets featured hand-embroidered band logos (see figure 3.3), either because commercially produced patches were not yet widely available, or because the fan required a larger logo than the patches they could purchase. Pete comments on this practice:

> I've still got my original two battle jackets, with all the embroidery on them that I did […]. I could be a bit crafty and, you know, do that, and it was also cheaper, if you had massive logos on the back I could just sit there, you know, if I had the patience I could just sit there with a needle and I could do it (Pete, 2014, p. 1, grammar unchanged).

By the mid 1980s metal-specific battle jackets were common amongst metal fans, many of whom had no direct connection to motorcycle culture. Whilst metal fans may also wear leather biker jackets, it is the lighter (and more easily sewn) denim jackets and vests that tend to predominate. Deena Weinstein describes the popularity of denim in this context:

> The jeans jacket, a legacy of the hippie, is more popular than the black leather jacket in terms of prevalence. These jackets are not only far less expensive than leather, they are also light enough for summer wear. Both kinds of jacket provide spaces for an array of

> patches, buttons, pins, and homemade artistic efforts (Weinstein, 2000, p. 128).[12]

If battle jackets were popular amongst metal fans in the 1980s, they were perhaps less so in the decade that followed. During the 1990s, the dominant metal styles of previous years such as 'thrash' and 'glam' metal became less fashionable within metal subcultures, giving way to new movements such as 'nu metal' and 'grunge' (Weinstein, 2000, pp. 56–57). Battle jackets did not disappear altogether, persisting amongst emerging extreme subgenres such as 'death' (an extreme form of thrash) and 'black' (occult-influenced) metal (Stubberud, Strømmen and Belgaux, 2016). In the decade after 2000, older styles of metal became popular again, finding new audiences and reinvigorated by the growing popularity of Scandinavian extreme and classic metal. Alongside this trend, battle jacket making surged in popularity once more. Today, the practice is widespread, facilitated by the presence of numerous internet forums (see figure 3.4) where users can upload and discuss images of their jackets (see for example tshirtslayer.com and thrashunlimited.com). The production and consumption of band patches is also thriving, with the Web making the finding and purchasing of patches much easier (see figure 3.5).

[12] There are multiple connections between hippie culture and motorcycle gangs. For example, members of the Hells Angels were connected with many members of the 1960s counterculture in California, such as Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg, Jerry Garcia and Timothy Leary (*Hells Angels*, 2015) and the 1969 film *Easy Rider* depicts close connections between these communities.

Figure 3.2: Jacket featuring biker patches alongside metal band logos, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire, UK, 09.08.2014. Photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Functions of symbolism

My interest as a painter is in the ways that images (in painting and beyond) can act symbolically to communicate ideas and associations (for a more detailed discussion of symbolism in painting see the previous chapter). In the case of the images displayed on battle jackets, meaning is communicated on a number of levels, some direct and some indirect. The associations brought to the jacket imagery and logos will vary according to the subject who is 'reading' them. A metal fan will often be aware of the direct meaning of particular patches – the music that the image and text relates to. To someone unfamiliar with the genre, however, these images will probably convey a less specific but still potentially vivid message. The image of a skull, for example, might in a general sense be taken to represent ideas of death, violence or menace. Should the skull be rendered in the distinctive style of the illustrator 'Pushead', a metal fan will understand it to be referring to the music of Metallica, arguably one of the most well-known metal bands of recent years. Through interviewing jacket makers, I was interested to find out what meanings they attached to their own jackets, and how these meanings were represented visually. It seems that whilst there are many overlaps in the ways that jackets are understood by fans, most also consider them to have significant individual meaning.

A sense of personal identity is an important symbolic function of the battle jacket to those within the subculture. Identity is a common theme in subcultural studies, often viewed as the nexus of the relationship between the individual and the social group. As long ago as 1959 psychologist Erik Erikson presented a model of individual identity aligned to the three categories of 'ego identity', 'personal identity' and 'social identity' (Erikson, 1959). Personal identity was used to describe a sense of unique individuality, whilst social identity referred to the role of relationships with other individuals and groups.

The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) made a significant contribution to studies of subcultural identity during the 1970s and beyond. Dick Hebdige, building on earlier CCCS work, attempted to deconstruct the messages of subcultural style. Hebdige saw subcultures as arising in particular times and places, as solutions to class-based problems (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 79 ff.). Members belonged to a social group with a collective identity, the characteristics of which were communicated through clothing and style, amongst other things (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 100–101). J. Patrick Williams (2011) sums up this approach as 'insider/outsider' – clothing, language and behaviours are used to demarcate an individual's identity as an 'insider' in contrast to the rest of society, considered 'outsiders'. Williams illustrates this with the example of 'straightedge' music fans in the United States. He quotes a fan who posted on an internet forum about his rationale for identifying with straightedge lifestyle values: 'I claim straightedge because I'm smart and angry and rebellious, and I will question everything that society tries to force me to swallow' (Williams, 2011, p. 131). In this example, the individual contrasts their (values-based) subcultural identity with a perceived homogenous mainstream labelled 'society' towards which they are antagonistic.

David Muggleton (2000) has built on the work of Hebdige, but recognises the complexities of defining subculture in a postmodern environment. Muggleton underlines the importance of appearance in defining identity in postmodern subcultures and attempts to describe the connection between style and meaning in subcultural expression. Muggleton uses the term 'distinctive individuality' to describe the ways in which members of a subculture differentiate themselves from the rest of society, and identify as part of a particular group. One of the main ways this occurs is through clothing and style practices. Muggleton describes distinctive individuality as 'the way that subculturalists highlight their individuality through a distinction from a collective reference group, in this case, conventionally dressed people' (Muggleton, 2000, p. 63). He goes on to outline the tensions that exist between the willingness of subculturalists to identify

with a group label (e.g. ‘metalhead’ or ‘goth’) and the postmodern tendency to navigate identity on a primarily individual basis. This can lead to an individual adopting the style of a particular subculture without necessarily identifying as a member of that group. Metal fans that I have spoken to tend to see themselves as part of metal subculture, even if this does not impact their behaviour beyond listening to metal music and going to concerts. For those that take the values of metal more seriously, subcultural influences may be more pervasive and permanent, from markers of appearance that cannot be taken off such as long hair, beards and tattoos (Weinstein, 2000, pp. 65, 129) to a ‘metal lifestyle’ that embraces regular heavy drinking and violent ‘moshing’ (Weinstein, 2000, p. 133). In the most extreme cases, some metal fans pursue their interest into serious occult practice and even ritual suicide (Granholm, 2015, pp. 27–28).

In her research amongst metal fans in the Czech Republic, Germany and Slovenia, Anna Baka (2015) sought to define what constitutes a ‘metal identity’. She found that whilst there is some fluctuation between levels of commitment to metal subculture, metal fans are a more cohesive group than might be expected from post-subcultural theories. Whilst outsiders might cast metal fans based on superficial judgements, within the scene itself ‘knowledge of the in-group differentiation is generally good. […] no sub-genre divisions seem to impair an overwhelming sense of community of all metalheads’ (Baka, 2015, p. 62). In other words, metal fans may be less inclined to appropriate the style of the battle jacket without a deeper commitment to the music it represents.

The battle jacket is an ideal way for a metal fan to express their distinctive individuality, to emphasise their allegiance to the subcultural group and their distinction from mainstream culture. It shows their status as insiders of the metal scene in contrast to the outsiders of the rest of society. Additionally, for many it may also be a way of communicating, to themselves as well as to others, a sense of their own particular

personality. This can be conveyed both by the choice of bands displayed on the jacket, and the methods of arrangement of patches and practices of customisation.

A metal fan called Eleanor refers to the importance of the jacket and metal style in communicating her identity: 'It's expressive. It is who you are. It's definitely important. I think we […] find style quite an important thing' (Eleanor, 2014, p. 4). In Muggleton's terms, Eleanor's sense of 'who you are' could be thought of in terms of being part of the metal subculture – an 'insider' as opposed to the 'outsiders' of the mainstream (Muggleton, 2000, p. 65), yet also maintaining a sense of personal expression *within* metal itself.

Another fan, Paul, describes his recent decision to begin making and wearing a battle jacket in personal terms:

> I never used to have one when I was young and sprightly back in the day, with long hair and all that stuff, I never had one back then. I guess, um, I thought it was too cliché I guess, back then, I was trying to be a bit different […] I guess when you get older you don't give a shit anymore, so, I wanted a battle vest, that was it. So, I went out, I got the vest (Paul, 2014, p. 1, grammar unchanged).

Paul recognises the sense in which a battle jacket would connect him to the wider subculture of metal fans, but paradoxically it was this sense of clear identification that prevented him from making a vest in his younger days, as he didn't want to appear 'cliché'. His later decision to make a jacket is construed in terms of a personal choice, and a desire to ignore what other fans might think. Later in the interview, Paul portrays his manner of dressing as idiosyncratic, consciously at odds with the tacitly accepted style codes of the metal scene:

> But I dressed a lot differently … my hair was long and I used to dye it as black as you like, and I used to wear leather trousers. I looked like somebody from a death metal, sorry, a black metal band. But I wasn't really into black metal, but I liked the aesthetic (Paul, 2014, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

Paul appears to feel free to play with the stylistic codes of metal dress, and whilst he still identifies as a metal fan in a wider sense, he seems to resist any perceived expectation to fit into a particular style and instead to assert his individual identity. A more marked strain of this tendency to individually mix subcultural style genres is defined by Muggleton as 'crossover' (Muggleton, 2000, p. 75) and can be read as a typically postmodern response to stylistic structures.

Alex, a female metal fan living in New Zealand, also emphasises the individual meaning of her jacket and its personal associations: 'This is a *personal* thing. You can't go and *buy* a jacket like this. And why would you, if you could? 'Cause, it doesn't make sense' (Alex, 2014, p. 4, grammar unchanged, emphasis original).

Band choices and autobiography

For many if not all fans, there is a clear link between musical taste and identity, or a sense of autobiography through music. The displaying of band logos and artwork can be viewed as a kind of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 2005) through which individuals seek to assert their status within the subculture and gain subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995). Whilst there may be an awareness of peer approval in selection of band patches, particularly in online communities (Ferrarese, 2015, p. 200), many fans stress personal choice and a charting of their listening tastes as primary factors. When asked about the choice of patches for her jacket, Alex responded that it featured 'all bands I love, I just want to represent those bands when I'm out and about' (Alex, 2014, p. 1, grammar

unchanged). Perhaps inevitably, however, these preferences will to some extent be influenced by the opinions of peers, the metal media and trends within metal music.

Sometimes, particular patches will have significance because of when or where they were acquired, or the period in the fan's life when they began listening to a certain band. In this sense the jacket may be used to chart life experiences as well as taste. When I interviewed Tony, he had recently created a new jacket to replace an old one that had worn out. He explained how several patches had been transferred from jacket to jacket as they had particular significance for him:

> I had an old, old AC/DC badge on there I've had to replace, so that one's only about five years old. The Alice Cooper one is relatively new … the Almighty one's off my old jacket. So that patch is over twenty years old, as is the Wolfsbane one. The Skid Row one's off my old jacket. Erm, the Volbeat one's new, Airbourne one's new. But the Slash one, I actually found that one, I've just had my girlfriend move in with me, and I was clearing out a load of drawers and I found it at the bottom of the drawer. I didn't even know I had it so I thought I'd stick it on, why not? (Tony, 2014, p. 4, grammar unchanged).

For Tony, the older patches transferred from one jacket to another connect the extent of his experience and history as a metal fan, whilst the most recent Slash patch is connected in his mind with a positive life change – the strengthening of his relationship with his girlfriend. In a related way, Paul identifies a particular Metallica patch on his jacket with an early concert experience that left a lasting impression on him: 'Metallica, probably one of the first bands I ever saw. I sneaked into the concert and that when I was fifteen – 'cause I was tall I could get away with it' (Paul, 2014, p. 3, grammar unchanged).

Symbolic functions expressed through the jacket

The sense of personal identity is very directly expressed in the visual and material nature of the battle jacket. The jacket is worn close to the body, usually over but sometimes also under other clothing (Mal TV, 2013). For many fans, the jacket is worn most of the time, and so represents a constant wardrobe feature even as they change other items of clothing. The fact that (for most fans) the patches have been sewn on by the wearer underlines through material practice the connection of the jacket to personal identity. In some instances, jackets will feature hand painting or embroidery, representing an even greater investment of personal time and skill (see the section on DIY processes below).

It is not insignificant that the greatest space for display is on the back of the jacket. This means that a fan's taste and 'allegiance' to particular bands is displayed prominently to those who are behind them, *whom they cannot see themselves.* This suggests a boldness or sense of self-assurance in display, as the fan cannot gauge the reaction of those viewing their jacket from behind. A link might be hypothesised here with the wearing of heraldic motifs in medieval combat. When armies fought facing each other in ranks, the emblem displayed on the back was mostly intended to identify a combatant to allies behind them. Opposing troops would normally approach them from the front, where they could be seen. Perhaps in a similar way, the prominent display on the back of a battle jacket implies the expectation of a 'friendly' gaze. The assumption might be that those viewing the wearer are either sympathetic to their tastes or, if they are not, may be intimidated instead.

Figure 3.3: Jacket featuring hand-embroidered logos, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire, 09.08.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

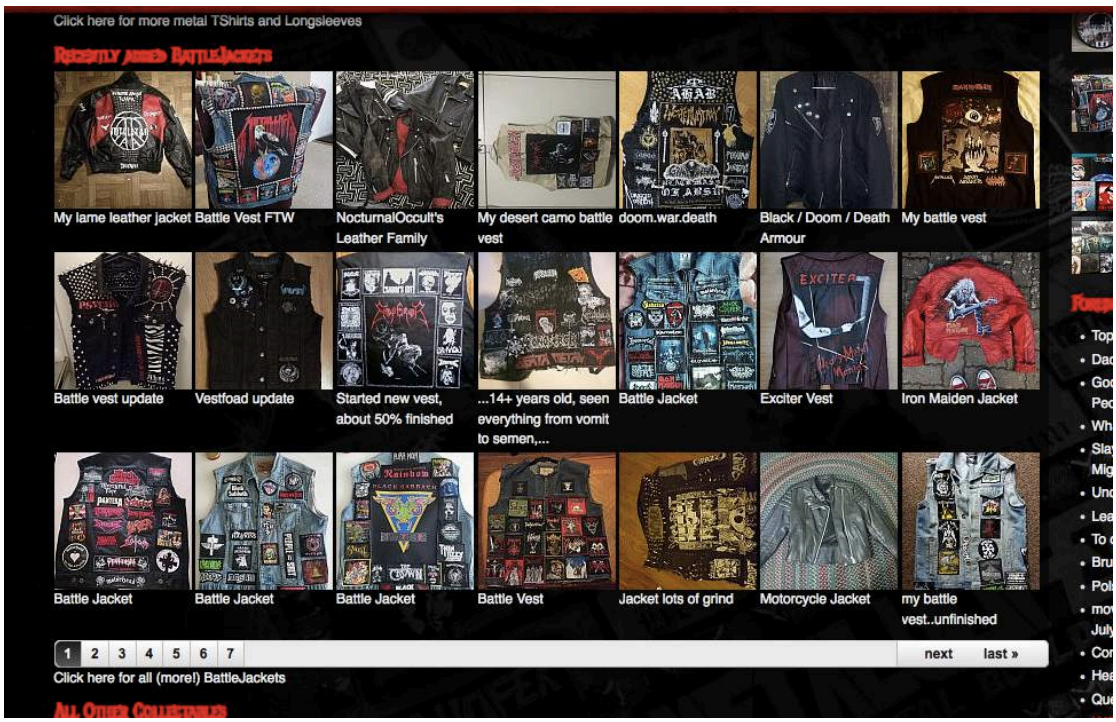

Figure 3.4: Battle jackets displayed on forum tshirtslayer.com. Available at tshirtslayer.com

Figure 3.5: Iron Maiden patch for sale on ebay.co.uk. Available at www.ebay.co.uk

Figure 3.6: Paul wearing his battle jacket, Sonisphere festival, Knebworth, UK, 04.07.2014. Photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Visual codes of authenticity

Rhetoric of authenticity abounds in subcultural discourse, from the endless arguments over who is 'more punk' in the American magazine *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* to the online debates between extreme metal fans as to what constitutes 'trve' or 'kvlt'. The autobiographical function of the battle jacket is closely tied to such a negotiation of authenticity. Within many subcultures there is an emphasis on being 'real' or authentic that is fundamental to an individual's sense of identity and standing within the peer community. If Hebdige (1979) first adapted the term 'bricolage' (from Claude Lévi-Strauss) in relation to the mixing of sartorial styles in subcultures since the 1950s, Ted Polhemus' survey *Streetstyle* (1994) shows how eclectic these combinations can be, and how important personal appearance is to the communication of subcultural values. Hebdige recognised the importance of the contested relationship between style and substance, arguing that style was 'profoundly superficial' as he believed it could not directly effect social change (Hebdige, 1979, p. 17). In a contemporary world of post-subcultures (to use Muggleton's term) such distinctions are not always so clear-cut. David Chaney (2004) argues that in postmodernity subcultural distinctions, along with those of the so-called 'mainstream', are irreversibly fractured 'into a plurality of lifestyle sensibilities and preferences' (Chaney, 2004, p. 47).

For the post-subculturalist, then, personal choices about clothing and style are just that – personal. They may or may not reflect deeper commitment to subcultural values and behaviours (Muggleton, 2000, p. 75). However, as has been argued earlier, some groups such as metal fans might prove to be exceptions to this post-subcultural rule. During his extensive participant-observer research into New York City bicycle messengers, Jeffrey Kidder drew distinctions between those for whom being a messenger was just a job, and those he terms 'lifestyle messengers' (Kidder, 2005, p. 349). For this latter group of messengers, a distinct subcultural style – a bricolaged mix of cycle gear, baggy work wear and

military surplus clothes, often repaired by hand – was interwoven with a distinct set of practices including flouting traffic laws and riding recklessly, refusing helmets and favouring brakeless track bikes. For Kidder, 'if action and meaning are in fact intertwined, then sociology cannot separate style from the social practices that create it' (Kidder, 2005, p. 348). In a related way, the meanings carried by battle jackets are inextricably connected with actions – both those actions involved in their construction, and the actions performed by the fan whilst wearing the jacket (such as headbanging, moshing, etc.).

Arguments about authenticity in metal style (as in any subculture) are hugely complicated by the effects of commodification and the commercial diffusion of the metal 'look'. John Clarke observed the ways in which subcultural styles are appropriated and assimilated by the fashion system, which turns them from 'lifestyles' to 'consumption styles' (Clarke, 1976, p. 188). The effect of this on subcultural participants might be to increase their concern with being authentic, defining themselves in opposition to those from outside the subculture who appropriate elements of the style because it suits current fashion tastes. In her research into American punks in the 1980s, Kathryn Fox used an objectivist model of status hierarchies to group them into two groups of 'real punks' and 'pretenders'. She further grouped the real punks into three ranked strata of 'hardcore punks', 'softcore punks' and 'preppie punks' (Fox, 1987, in Williams, 2011, p. 135). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital', Sarah Thornton looked at how authenticity was negotiated in the production and consumption of dance music in the 1990s – in terms of both the records themselves, and the dance styles they facilitated. Thornton described how authenticity is manifested through a process of 'enculturation' (Thornton, 1995, p. 85) and developed Bourdieu's term into the idea of subcultural capital. Subcultural capital is acquired and manifested through numerous practices and behaviours, and objectified through clothing and consumption. Authenticity is key to the construction of identity through subcultural capital:

> Nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard. For example, fledgling clubbers of fifteen or sixteen wishing to get into what they perceive as a sophisticated dance club will often reveal their inexperience by over-dressing or confusing 'coolness' with the exaggerated cold blank stare (Thornton, 1995, p. 12).

The inference here might be that, for those who are really embedded in the scene in question, the true revelation of authentic identification is in knowing not to try too hard, and how this misjudgement might be revealed. Nicola Allett (2013) uses the idea of subcultural capital in her enquiry into notions of 'connoisseurship' amongst extreme metal fans:

> The connoisseur exhibits knowledge and mastery of a subject. Likewise my respondents had thorough knowledge and expertise related to extreme metal music and culture. Such knowledge, which included extreme metal music history, genres, underground bands, instruments, music labels, and terminologies, can be interpreted as forms of subcultural capital which (if acquired) give status and validation to the extreme metal fan (Allett, 2013, p. 172).

Similarly, in my conversations with metal fans about their battle jackets, I was often aware of tacit distinctions being drawn between 'true' metal fans, veterans of many live concerts and festivals with detailed knowledge of more arcane bands, and those whose interest and commitment might be more at a surface or stylistic level. This differentiation could be manifested in a fan's jacket, with subtle judgements made about the choice of patches, their deployment and the general appearance of the garment – whether it looked really lived-in or newly constructed (although a fan may feel that they can spot an 'authentic' jacket, in practice delineating criteria to judge by can be difficult). Amongst older metal fans particularly, there is a sense that one's battle jacket should be a genuine reflection of subcultural experience. Long-time metal fan Pete was

emphatic on the importance of authentic participation in the metal scene as well as autobiographical representation when selecting patches for his jacket:

> They should represent your life. And in this case my life in bands. Like the bike jackets. You only get a patch if you've done something to get it […] you have to earn them by being there and getting it and saying 'I was there and here's the proof!' And that's how I treat this jacket. I only put on patches of bands that I have seen live, and that's a rule. […] 'Cause this is documenting my life and my taste in music, and consequently there's a lot of non-metal stuff on here as well, which *really* fucks people off! The sort of, all your 'true metal heads' go 'How can you have *that* next to *that*?!' And I say 'Because I like 'em. Got a problem?!' (Pete, 2014, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

For Pete, the jacket represents a material document of his long experience within metal subculture (see figures 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11). Band patches are not chosen arbitrarily (or even just because he likes the band) but commemorate attendances at live concerts (prior to the internet, concerts were often the main outlet for the sale of band patches). Pete presents his physical presence at these concerts as the ultimate authentication of his status as a 'true' metal fan. There is a direct interface here between lived experience, the meanings attached to the jacket and the visual codes embedded within it. Many other fans would share this view, as concert attendance requires commitment of time, money and perhaps long-distance travel. Alex's view corresponds with Pete's:

> Most of the bands I've seen, and the occasional one I *haven't* seen. I've got a Pantera one, and I obviously can't see them … so I've erm, just sewn them on out of a bit of loyalty rather than anything else but … erm, it is definitely representational of my youth, of my life, yeah (Alex, 2014, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

In this way, the battle jacket represents much more than just the wearer's musical taste, testifying to their lived experience as a heavy metal fan – metal being a genre that places great importance on the live concert experience and its attendant practices such as headbanging, moshing and stage-diving (Weinstein, 2000, pp. 131, 228–229). Pete's view of the battle jacket seems to fit with Allett's notion of connoisseurship (2013), in that appearance and substance are viewed as closely connected, and the message of the jacket appeals to a strongly defined conception of correct practice (Muggleton, 2000, p. 34). Throughout the interview, Pete was scathing in his reference to style practices that he felt did not represent authentic commitment to the subculture they related to (particularly as regards metal fans). The idea of appropriating a style for its own sake, in a way that might be thought of as postmodern (Muggleton, 2000, p. 77), was anathema to him:

> I've seen people selling ready-made patch jackets! 'Heavy metal look jackets'! And there was one, there was this famous meme that went round the internet last year, or round Facebook, of – I can't remember who it was – Chris Brown? I can't remember the guy – leather jacket painted up with Suicidal Tendencies, Excel, all bands like that, real cool hardcore bands, and he didn't have a fuckin' clue what any of it was! His stylist had bought it and gone 'Wear that!' And that fucks me off, you know. If you're representing something, you should know what it is (Pete, 2014, p. 4, grammar unchanged).

Like many subculturalists, Pete is deeply offended by the tendency of fashion trends to co-opt subcultural style for profit, making it temporarily fashionable and leading to widespread adoption of a subcultural look by those outside the scene. But he is also critical of the recent tendency of (often younger) metal fans to quickly produce jackets that they have not 'earned' according to his definition:

> There are people walking around here [mimics another fan] 'I've got twelve patches!' and they're sewn nice and neatly, equally spaced and they're sewn on by their mum, and it looks wrong. You know, it's got to have a bit of chaos to make it look right. I mean, obviously you're looking round at a lot of jackets this weekend, you know what I'm talking about. A lot of them are like brand-new looking jackets with brand-new patches all perfectly sewn on, with massive spaces in between and not much thought put into it (Pete, 2014, p. 5, grammar unchanged).

Pete clearly delineates tacitly understood criteria for two types of jackets – the authentic, which represent genuine subcultural experience (according to his definition), and the inauthentic, which attempt the appearance of a genuine jacket. This fake jacket, according to Pete, fails because the creator has failed to properly understand the unwritten rules of metal subculture relating to battle jackets. They have taken a short cut to the appearance of a long-time fan, but their fake jacket has not been 'earned'. The authentic jacket, by contrast, is personally (if imperfectly) created and lived: 'It's just nice that *you* know that *you* made it. You created it, it's your baby!' (Pete, 2014, p. 5, grammar unchanged).

The postmodern phenomenon of style without substance is even more apparent when fashion designers produce ready-to-wear garments that look like a metal fan's customised clothing. Recent examples include a collection of death metal inspired clothing by KTZ, who were recently criticised for copying a North American shaman's garment without permission (see Watts and Moore-Bridger, 2015) (figure 7), and a similar range by high street chain H&M (figure 8). Of course, the artificial fabrication of an authentic look in clothing styles is not new. Many examples exist in the history of fashion, particularly in post-war British subcultures such as rockers, hippies, skins and punks to name but a few.

Visual authenticity expressed through the jacket

The sense of authenticity or being ‘real’ is strongly communicated through the handmade aesthetic of the battle jacket. Patches might be deployed in a deliberately haphazard manner (although ordered nonetheless), and prominent and uneven stitching is considered a positive feature, unlike on most garments. Pete is critical of jackets that are ‘sewn nice and neatly, equally spaced and they’re sewn on by their mum, and it looks wrong. You know, it’s got to have a bit of chaos, to make it look right’ (Pete, 2014, p. 5).

Hand-rendered logos or motifs may also be employed, perhaps painted in a self-consciously imperfect or idiosyncratic way (see the section on DIY processes below).

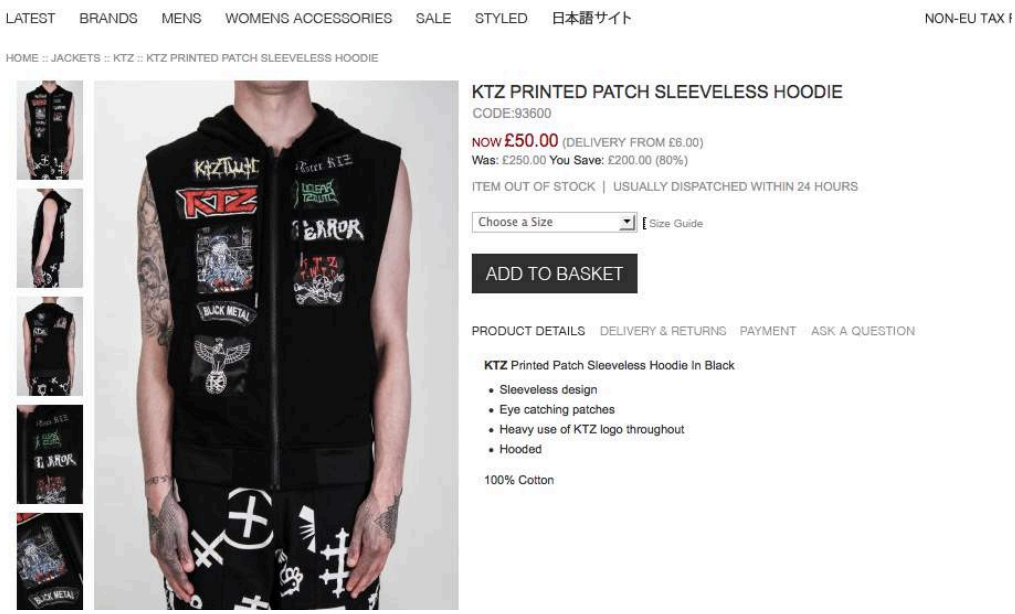

Figure 3.7: Pre-customised metal-style hoodie by KTZ advertised for sale online. Available at autographmenswear.com

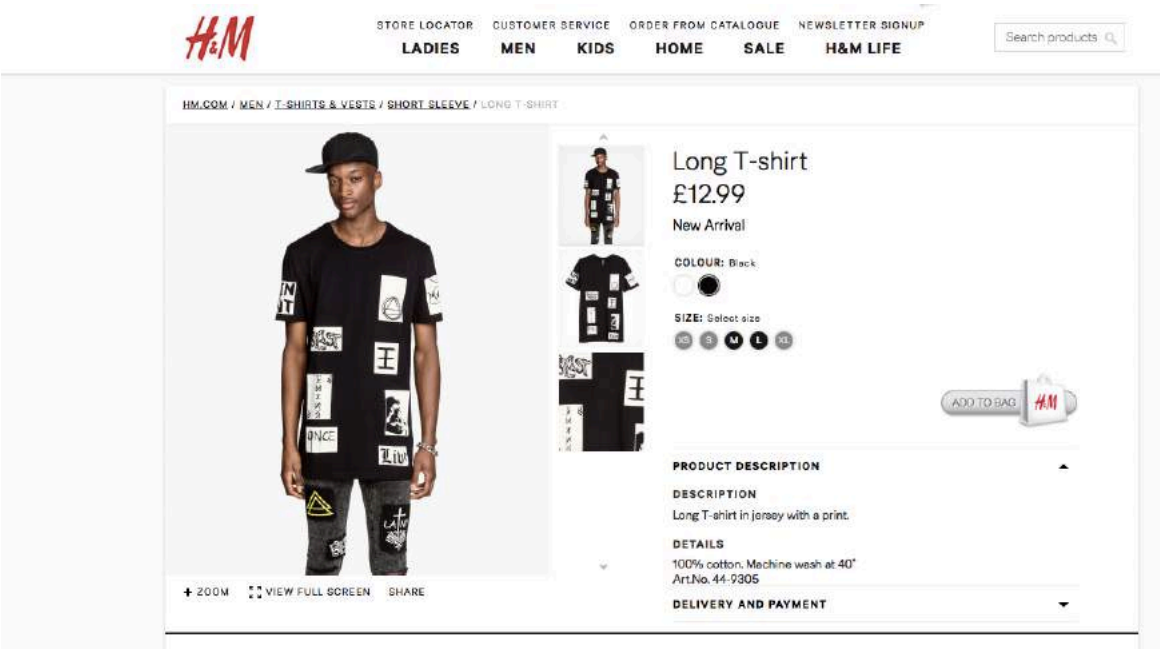

Figure 3.8: Pre-customised T-shirt and jeans featuring metal-style patches by H&M. Available at www2.hm.com/en_gb/men/

The foundation of the battle jacket is the denim jacket, a garment created to be hard-wearing and functional and that still carries strong connotations of blue collar labour and a utilitarian sense of honest hard work (Downey, 2014). Denim itself communicates authenticity, and the customisation of the jacket heightens this sense. (There is an irony in the prevalence of pre-aged or 'distressed' denim that has been popular in recent years. Whilst the appearance of age is achieved, it is deliberately artificial, removing the garment further from its functional roots. The concept of authenticity is thus highly complex in such examples.[13]) When jacket sleeves are removed, the edges of the arm sockets are usually left to fray, giving a distinctive sequence of trailing threads that become diffuse and white over time. This communicates a sense that the garment has been personally customised by the wearer, who does not have time or inclination to tidy it up, as they choose not to observe 'mainstream' concerns with neatness in clothing. Marks of wear such as fading, rips, holes, burns or repairs are viewed by fans as enhancing the jacket's

[13] For a study of fake denim production and consumption see Pinheiro-Machado (2010).

symbolic value. Nick describes this process as he recalls how he began to make his jacket: 'I actually owned the jean jacket for about ten [years], and ironing on the Exodus patch came from covering a cigarette burn in the beginning, and it just kind of grew from there' (Nick, 2015, p. 2).

It should be noted that authenticity as a concept has been significantly deconstructed and critiqued by a host of postmodern thinkers (for example, in Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum (1994) and Foucault's deconstruction of the representations of 'reality' in systems of power (1977)). It is not the intention here to argue for or against the currency of the concept of authenticity, but rather to show that such an idea figures significantly in the visual rhetoric of heavy metal, and particularly of the battle jacket. The prominence given to visual codes of authenticity by jacket makers may indeed beg the question of whether or not this is in fact a staging or appearance of authenticity only. Painting in turn shares this preoccupation with the appearance of the genuine – the knowing use of such devices as paint drips, gestural brushwork, exposed raw canvas and the on-going re-use of images from art history are all testament to such concerns.

In turn, neither the artist nor the academic researcher can occupy a neutral space from which to assess objectively whether or not the term 'authenticity' has any currency within either subculture or art practice. As distinctions between 'high' and 'mass' culture become increasingly blurred and problematised (Collins, 1989; Ross, 1989; Fiske, 1990), it becomes difficult to maintain these hierarchies without reinforcing elitist agendas (Berger, 1972).

Common traits of jackets and connections between metal fans

Battle jackets embody a sense of connection between metal fans, demonstrated through their common form and visual structure, which varies according to personal customisation from one jacket to another. In

this sense the jacket might be likened to a particular genre of painting – each example will differ according to the creator's intentions, but tacitly understood codes of arrangement will be adhered to (or at times deliberately transgressed). Once more it is at the visual level that these negotiations of difference and similarity are worked out.

Muggleton's concept of 'distinctive individuality' emphasises both the way in which subcultural style is used by individuals to express their personal identity, and also their identification with a wider collective group (2000, pp. 63–64). For many metal fans, the sense that they are set apart from the 'mainstream' by their membership of the metal subculture is of great importance. As Muggleton puts it, 'Invoking a reference group enables certain individuals to emphasise their insider status as members of an esoteric, subterranean scene through self-exclusion from a larger category of uninitiated "outsiders" ' (Muggleton, 2000, pp. 63–64). (In the art world inner circles exist too, of privileged or fashionable artists, curators, collectors and critics.) For these fans, the metal T-shirt or battle jacket plays an important role in identifying them to other metal fans, and in separating them from the rest of society. The battle jacket perhaps marks a greater commitment to metal than the T-shirt as it represents a larger investment of money and time. Metal band T-shirts are also more likely to be worn as fashion items by non-metal fans and have in recent years even been produced by leading retailers in the UK such as Primark, BHS and H&M to complement ranges of rock or punk style clothing.

The sense in which the battle jacket strengthens bonds within metal communities is clear in several of the interviews I conducted. Jenna, a Canadian fan, reflects:

> All of my friends that go to shows [have jackets]. I do have friends, one friend actually, who doesn't have a vest, but she sews patches on black hoodies. […] I have other friends that have leather jackets that they sew … pretty much everybody that I know does something

> with patches […]. Even if you don't know somebody you go up to them and you're like 'Oh my god, sweet patch!' (Jenna and Nick, 2015, p. 6, grammar unchanged).

Emily, an American fan, explains this role of the battle jacket in more depth:

> Metalheads are outsiders from popular culture and the mainstream and all that, because we choose to be that way, to become part of this underground community of people. You tend to exclude the mainstream from your insider … I call it 'outsider/insider' because you're an outsider but you're inside of this outsider culture. So yes, I do think that metalheads like to wear their vests because it gives you the opportunity to meet other metalheads, because someone can see you from down the street and say 'Oh I love that patch, I want to talk to that person', because you have that connection, whereas everyone else walking around the city is not going to understand (Emily, 2015, p. 6, grammar unchanged).

In this way the battle jacket allows the individual to connect with the wider metal subculture, to strengthen bonds with other fans and potentially to make new friendships, based on shared appreciation of certain bands. The more niche or esoteric the band, the more likely it is to be remarked upon by another fan as the connection is considered more unusual. Indeed, displaying the logos of very obscure bands increases a fan's 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995; Allett, 2013) as they demonstrate rarefied musical tastes and knowledge of metal.

Visual connections displayed on jackets

A visual sense of community is embodied in the common form of the jacket. The way in which the cut-off denim (usually blue or black) provides a template for customisation underlines a shared expression, even if

particular band choices vary. The panels of the jacket provide some standard forms for patch arrangement – the large back panel lending itself to the slightly tapered rectangular back patch (manufactured to this shape in response to the design of denim jackets) (see figure 3.9). The yoke across the shoulders gives a horizontal bar for placing several small patches, or larger logo strip patches (not unlike the 'top rocker' featured on bike club jackets (see figure 3.1)). The side panels allow for vertical stacking of smaller patches, whilst the waistband might feature mid-sized logo strips. The chest pockets are often decorated with circular patches, and some fans add small pin badges to the pockets and chest area of the jacket.[14]

Patch choices can also express community. The inclusion of certain iconic band logos or artworks on many jackets underlines connections between fans. Iron Maiden's 'Eddy' and Slayer's pentagram devices are amongst the most commonly featured.

Depictions of resistance

The extent to which contemporary subcultures can be viewed as offering resistance to power is the subject of much debate amongst subcultural theorists. Hebdige (1979) viewed resistance to the dominant social order to be a hallmark of post-war subcultures such as the teds, rockers, rude boys and punks. Weinstein (2000) traced the roots of heavy metal back to the counterculture movements of the 1960s, as well as the subversive traditions of folk and blues music and the outlaw motorcycle clubs that began to form after World War II. Regardless of whether or not it has ever represented a serious threat to mainstream social order and values,[15] heavy metal has always been associated with rebellion, refusal and resistance (which may be defined differently according to social conditions

[14] For an in-depth analysis of the structure of a battle jacket see Chapter 5.
[15] For a detailed consideration of media controversies surrounding metal, see Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine (2013), *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures*.

Figure 3.9: Tom Cardwell, *Pete's Jacket (Motorhead),* 2015, painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm.

– the characteristics of rebellion and resistance will find different meaning for a metal fan in Saudi Arabia compared to one in England). These values continue to characterise the rhetoric of metal and are visibly expressed through the artwork and logos of bands, through slogans on T-shirts and in the customisation of battle jackets. Tony describes how these values directed the choice of patches for his jacket: 'I really went for

attitude. I went, you know, I've got the finger on there, the horns, I went for rock'n'fuckin'roll on there. I wanted a bit of attitude on there' (Tony, 2014, p. 3, grammar unchanged).

Emily explains how the violent or horrific imagery of metal artwork acts as a statement of refusal of mainstream values and identifies the wearer as someone who embraces the alternative values of the metal scene. Within this subculture, a focus on the morbid or violent is often viewed as a positive thing:

> I think that people who are passionate about metal and get into metal like the feeling of empowerment, the feeling of power, the feeling of strength that the music gives them. And to be bold, to stand out from the crowd and say 'I'm comfortable with myself, I'm proud of who I am, I'm proud of my music, and I'm not afraid of what you think.' So having some violent imagery is basically saying 'I am not like you, and I am comfortable wearing this kind of stuff, and you might be offended by it but …' […] I think metal music and certain bands tend to touch upon things that most people are uncomfortable talking about. Like violence, or certain things that happen in the world. They tend to bring focus to topics that are un-discussed, things that people are afraid of talking about basically (Emily, 2015, pp. 5–6, grammar unchanged).

Resistance expressed through the jacket

The rhetoric of resistance within metal music is pervasive, though it does not often find active expression outside of the limits of the concert setting. Unlike punk, metal is not primarily political (with some exceptions: thrash and death metal bands tend to write about warfare, abuses of power, etc.). Instead, there is a sense of resistance on a personal level directed against a perceived 'mainstream' conservative moral order (Weinstein, 2000, p. 245). After the initial 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' in the late 1970s,

the development of metal has been strongest in North America. Consequently, metal bands have often sought to define themselves in opposition to conservative Christianity and have thus courted occult imagery and lyrics, designed to provoke moral outrage. In some cases, these efforts have been rewarded by artwork being banned, as with Deicide's *Once Upon the Cross*, which was thought to incite 'violence, hatred and the killing of Christians' (Phillipov, 2013, p. 152). Even if these shock tactics are increasingly diminished in effect (evidenced by the 'household name' status achieved by bands like Iron Maiden, Metallica and Slayer), the use of such themes and imagery persists, with some genres seeking to find yet more horrific imagery and subject matters (Bardine, 2015).

This rhetoric of resistance is signified visually through the strong and discordant colour combinations and high contrast featured on jackets. Combinations of the colours black, white and red are particularly common, and visual links might be observed with the iconography of twentieth-century ideologies such as communism and fascism (Hedge Olson, 2013), or with military identities (indeed, some bands such as Slayer make these links explicitly). Other colours such as acid greens, pinks and oranges, fiery yellows and blood reds are also often used to give a striking or discordant effect. Additions such as studs, chains or imitation bullets may be added to jackets by some fans, designed to communicate violence, aggression or menace.

Perhaps the clearest way in which resistance is communicated is through the imagery, band names and symbols featured on the jacket, as discussed above. Images of skulls, zombies, corpses (or parts thereof), monsters and demons, battle scenes or people experiencing pain are all common in metal artwork. Symbols often refer to occult religions, or corruptions of Christian symbols such as inverted crosses or pentagrams. Some bands use symbols with links to fascist iconography or Norse

mythology. Band names are often chosen to express dark or violent ideas, or to openly offend non-metal fans.

Practices of customisation

Material consciousness

Intrinsic to the nature of battle jackets is the idea of DIY construction (in part inherited from the punk movement). These are highly physical garments, and an involvement with their material construction is key to the fan's relationship with the jacket that is in many ways viewed as symbolic of their participation in the metal scene in general. In *The Craftsman* (2008) Richard Sennett examines the changing role of craft practices (in the widest sense) in culture, arguing that a personal involvement with skilled making processes is important both for the individual and for society. Sennett describes the importance of 'material consciousness', a kind of interaction with the world through things immediate to our situation: 'we become particularly interested in the things we can *change*' (2008, p. 120, emphasis added).

Sennett's material consciousness is a useful way of thinking about both the work of the painter in the studio, and the metal fan constructing their jacket.
The selection of a jacket, modifying it, selecting patches and deciding where to deploy them as well as the central process of hand-stitching them on to the denim are all experiences that cannot easily be understood unless they are felt first-hand. Sennett recognises the extensive role of tacit knowledge in craft practice – skills that are not easily taught or explained, but are gained through trial and error. Jacket making, like painting, is not primarily a theoretical discipline; it must be experienced through practice as well as interpreted through theory.

Embroidery

In earlier examples of battle jackets from the late 1970s and early 1980s (whilst bikers' patch jackets existed long before this, my interview responses and subsequent research identify this period as the beginning of the heavy metal battle jacket in its current form, as discussed above), hand embroidery can be found in place of manufactured band patches, which it seems were not yet widely produced (Pete, 2014). I have met a number of fans who still wear their jackets from this period, some displaying a considerable amount of careful hand embroidery (see illustrations below). Pete, a jacket maker since the early 1980s, told me:

> I could be a bit crafty and, you know, do that [embroider], and it was also cheaper, if you had massive logos on the back I could just sit there, you know, if I had the patience I could just sit there with a needle and I could do it! (Pete, 2014, p. 1, grammar unchanged).

It is significant here that Pete mentions both the time involved (patience) and the physical tool (needle) in his account of embroidering. Craftspeople invariably value their tools as conduits for practice and are keenly aware of time as a measure of labour. Conversely, the products of craft might also be thought of as reifications of time spent, physical agglomerations of intangible hours. Embroidery is particularly time-consuming and was historically used to pass leisure hours in domestic settings, or to occupy the hands and thoughts of convalescing or inactive service personnel (Kenny, McMillan and Myrone, 2014).

The practice of embroidering on battle jackets represents a deep investment in metal music, with the fan's loyalty displayed publicly but also marked privately through the time expended in customisation. It is also notable as an example of embroidery (often stereotyped as a feminine occupation) practised by men, in what has been noted as a predominantly white, male, working-class subculture (Weinstein, 2007).

Hand painting

Whilst hand-painted designs on jackets are not as common amongst metal fans as they are in some other subcultures (e.g. punk and goth), they can be found on some jackets, particularly as a way of creating patches for bands that could not be found for sale. I have met fans with designs painted directly onto the jacket itself, as well as some who have painted onto pieces of fabric and then stitched these on like a woven patch. An example of the latter practice can be seen again on Pete's jacket. This is a patch created by hand using acrylic paint and representing the band Gong (see figures 3.10 and 3.11). When interviewed, Pete was very proud of this patch, in part due to the intricacy of the design and how faithfully it represents the band's artwork. He described the process of painting the patch:

> I went down to a … what was it? … a 00000 sable brush! And thinned the paint down and I actually managed to get the lines in, that's hand brushed! That took me hours! I'm sitting there with one of those big magnifying lenses that old people use to read the newspaper … That took me about four hours to paint, but it worked! (Pete, 2014, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

Again, it is notable that Pete refers to both the tools used to make the painting and the time it took, as well as describing the consistency of the paint. As discussed earlier, my own experience of painting on jackets made me aware of the properties of paint and the importance of consistency, as well as contributing to my interest in detailed painting.[16] It is also interesting that Pete did not use his obvious skill at rendering to create an original design from his own imagination; rather his goal was to

[16] Whilst the methods and techniques used in such painting may overlap with techniques used in more academic painting, the institutions of both subculture and 'high' culture harbour exclusionary differences.

Figures 3.10 and 3.11: Pete with his jacket and detail of hand-painted *Gong* patch, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire, UK, 09.08.2014. Photographs by Jon Cardwell.

achieve a faithful reproduction of an existing artwork. This also seems to be a common trait of much battle jacket customisation: to faithfully reproduce the artwork or logos of bands, rather than varying or elaborating these designs, or inventing one's own.

Jeanie Finlay's documentary *Sound It Out* (2011) portrays an independent record shop in the north of England and profiles some of its regular customers. Part of the film focuses on two metal fans, Sam and Gareth, who talk about making their battle jackets. Gareth has a jacket featuring a handmade back patch for the band Pisschrist. He comments: 'This back patch took me three hours to stencil and paint' (Finlay, 2011). Once more, the importance to the maker of the time spent in producing the patch is a

major part of its significance and value to him.[17] As with Pete's patch, Gareth's stencilled work closely represents a pre-existing artwork for his chosen band, rather than his own invention. Amongst many streams of craft and folk art practice it is often the case that the goal of the practitioner is to closely reproduce accepted forms or archetypes, with innovation occurring gradually and collectively rather than individually (Sennett, 2008). This is perhaps the inverse of the aim of the artist (in their contemporary guise).

DIY patches

As well as hand painting, a more common method of making patches where manufactured bands are unobtainable is to cut out designs on band T-shirts. Occasionally, some fans might even screenprint their own patches, based on band logos. The use of these custom patches might be due to size requirements: for example, if a larger back patch is required than the stock commercial sizes, or if the design in question is not available as a patch. A jacket maker I interviewed called Chris cited several of these motives for making his custom Alice Cooper back patch:

> I made the back patch myself … It's an old shirt that I had from the 2007 tour. I just couldn't find any back patches at a decent price that I liked. They were all weird shapes. So I just bit the bullet, cut it up and stuck it on (Chris, 2014, p. 3, grammar unchanged).

Summary: 'material individuality'

[17] The tendency to measure the value of work by the time and labour involved is associated more with craft practice than with 'fine' art (Sennett, 2008). In the case of painting, investment of time is not necessarily an indication of value. The valuing of spontaneity, expression and concept that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has led to a situation in which the prices paid for artworks often have little if any connection with the labour needed to make them.

Battle jackets are extremely important to metal fans, both as markers of membership of the metal subculture and as visual expressions of a sense of personal identity constructed through musical taste. The jackets are constructed and 'read' by other fans through complex codes that can be thought of in terms of symbolism of identity, depictions of authenticity, shared values, resistance and practices of customisation (similarly, paintings are constructed and 'read' by artists and critics in terms of symbolic codes relating to ideas of originality, authenticity, structures of similarity, resistance to a perceived mainstream, etc.). It is through the visual and material aspects of the jackets that these ideas are embodied and demonstrated. It is important to consider the meaning of both the craft and DIY practices involved in the making of battle jackets and the finished articles in understanding their significance to metal fans as well as to the wider culture.

An argument for the importance and symbolic functions of battle jackets has been outlined in relation to Muggleton's idea of distinctive individuality, as well as Thornton's subcultural capital and Sennett's material consciousness. The term 'material individuality' is proposed as a way of referring to these ideas, and to underline the ways in which the battle jacket reifies them in a material form.

Chapter 4: ‘Somewhere back in time’, or a speculative history of the battle jacket

Figure 4.1: Tom Cardwell, *Battle Jacket Map,* 2015, Collage, laser prints and acrylic on paper, 1189 × 841 mm.

In fact, the two contradictory impressions could nevertheless refer to a single object: whether the castle, for years visited only as a stopping place, had gradually degenerated into an inn, and the lord and lady had found themselves reduced to the roles of host and hostess … or whether a tavern, such as one sees in the vicinity of castles, to give drinks to soldiers and horsemen, had invaded – the castle being long abandoned – the ancient, noble halls to install its benches and hogsheads there, and the pomp of those rooms … had conferred on the inn an unforeseen dignity, sufficient to put ideas in the heads of the host and hostess, who finally came to believe themselves the rulers of a brilliant court (Calvino, 1977, p. 4).

Whilst, as has been discussed, the battle jacket in its particular contemporary form has probably existed for little more than 40 years, connections might be made with practices that date back much further into the realms of medieval heraldry and perhaps beyond. The 'map' in figure 4.1 traces some of these connections visually. It is not ordered in a linear or hierarchical way (although the examples do follow a loose chronology from the left-hand side to the right), but rather shows how relationships might be inferred. The time period represented is roughly from the 1400s to the present. The nodal nature of the map also avoids the vertical hierarchy of ordering culture according to 'high' and 'low'. As different cultural forms are intermingled their meaning changes, and questions of which are superior ought to become redundant.

This is not an attempt to plot a concrete history, in the way that a dress or fashion historian might wish to do. Nor is the aim to 'prove' that battle jackets have actually existed for a long time (although arguably they have done, in some form or other). Rather it is a tying together of visual threads, a juxtaposition of one image with another that might offer resonance, to pluck some notes into a chord. It is the particular preserve of artworks to hold disparate things together and to charge their constituent parts with collective symbolism (Bryson, Holly and Moxey 1991, p. 61). In creating a number of collages (such as the one in figure 4.1), I have tried to demonstrate these organic, speculative and fluctuating connections visually. The account that follows might best be considered as a tracing of these in words, and a vocalising of the train of thoughts I have had in approaching the wider series of works for this project.

In his collection of narratives based on tarot cards (*The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, 1977), Italo Calvino suggests contrasting readings of the same series of symbols. This questioning of the certainty of any one reading might lead the reader to consider the fixity of a symbolic system. Calvino uses the opposing (yet complementary) images of a castle and a tavern to demonstrate how the same entity may be perceived in very different ways.

So with the lineage of the battle jacket, this series of historical artefacts might be connected or construed variously. Equally, alternative lineages and histories might be traced by those who would wish to.

The duality of Calvino's proposition is also relevant in that it suggests two polarities of power that might be reversed. The castle, of course, is a symbol of the social and political elite – the aristocracy of medieval Europe – and its walls would have been created to protect a wealthy few. The banqueting hall plays host to high society, even if the manners of some of the knights are none too refined. The tavern is quite the opposite as a social setting. Not only could it be frequented by the lowliest of the feudal strata, but it might also be thought of as a morally dubious place or 'den of vice' that the more privileged would avoid publicly, lest they be linked to scandal. The tavern might be thought of as a place of festivity or bacchanalia, where the normal moral and social order became elastic and a certain amount of transgression was accepted, even welcomed.

It is not difficult to read these social poles as analogies for levels of culture. In the sense that I am seeking to discuss the tradition of battle jackets and their iconography in relation to a wider sense of art history, the application becomes clear. The castle can stand for the preserves of 'high culture' in Matthew Arnold's sense (Arnold, 1869/2009), with all the hierarchies that the elite model of Western art preserves. Indeed, an ivory tower is not such a different image. Heavy metal culture can comfortably be represented by the tavern, with its rough manners, bawdy chauvinism and hard drinking. It is not elitist, and does not pretend to be, although it may harbour a measure of inverse snobbery (the idea of authenticity and blue collar honesty held up as more valuable than the fakery of false airs and graces) (Weinstein, 2000, pp. 113–117).

Just as with the images of the castle and the tavern, these two poles of culture might be switched at any time, one informing and 'leading' the other. On the one hand, the battle jacket as a cultural artefact can be

'read' through the lens of Western art history, as in one sense I am doing here. On the other hand, another cultural product – the romantic landscape painting, say – might be reinterpreted in the light of its reincarnation in fantasy art via the metal album cover. The subcultural values and making traditions that underpin the battle jacket give a rather different framing to the product of the salon tradition. Thus the following examples will be presented in both directions – through the way in which they provide a background to the idea of the battle jacket, as well as how the contemporary battle jacket might reframe the idea of the past.

Heraldry

The heraldic system of using symbols for identification and allegiance prefigures many more recent clothing practices, from military uniforms to subcultural costumes:

> From the dawn of history, long before man could read or write he used symbols and emblems to convey his ideas. In the days of the Roman Empire the Romans carried the eagle atop their standards as a symbol of strength. The Old Celtic clans used a system of colours to indicate social and political standing (Williams, no date).

In a very real sense the heraldic garment was the battle jacket *par excellence* – performing the vital function of identifying a warrior as friend or foe. As well as being displayed on standards and shields, heraldry also found its way on to the plates of the armour covering the torso, creating a kind of decorative and protective garment. Although this armour may have been largely decorative, reserved for the parade wear of those of highest rank due to its prohibitive cost, many soldiers would have worn a heraldic tabard over the top of standard armour to perform the same function (Wroth, 2013) (figures 4.2 and 4.3).

In some similar ways the battle jacket acts as an identifier. The battle may not be a literal one (although some mosh pits can get pretty violent), but the second half of the twentieth century saw subcultures (including heavy metal) defend their identities jealously (although there have been many crossovers between different subgenres, and boundary lines shift with perspective). The visual identification of the metal fan in the symbolic wars of subculture is an important function of the jacket. As groups of soldiers may join forces to fight a common enemy, so in some situations any two battle jacket wearers will feel themselves allied. In the melee of the metal festival or large concert, however, apparently insignificant differences between jackets (and the diverse subgenres of metal that these differences represent) become keenly important.

The wearer of a jacket emblazoned with the arcane logos of underground death or black metal bands may feel very little kinship with the vintage rocker whose vest shows the artwork of stadium bands like Metallica, Iron Maiden, Guns N' Roses or Dio. It is also possible to think of the battle jacket as a kind of armour, once more in a symbolic sense. Donning a garment emblazoned with the logos and artwork of bands, which are often violent or morbid in nature, is to take on an aegis – a cloak of protection.

Figure 4.2: Illustration showing a heraldic tabard, Thomas Hawley, Clarenceux King of Arms, depicted in his tabard on a grant of arms of 1556, illustration. Available at wikipedia.org

Figure 4.3: Heraldic tunic from the House of Orange-Nassau, attributed to Johan Pietersz. Smout, 1647, silk, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Available at www.rijksmuseum.nl

The wearer might feel that the aggressive element of this appearance marks them out as someone not to be trifled with. In another way, the jacket might offer protection from 'normality' by conferring a kind of alternative identity on the fan, giving them a heightened sense of self through identification with metal culture. This idea is articulated by Emily, an American metal fan whom I interviewed:

> I think that people who are passionate about metal and get into metal like the feeling of empowerment, the feeling of power, the feeling of strength that the music gives them. And to be bold. To stand out from the crowd and say 'I'm comfortable with myself, I'm proud of who I am, I'm proud of my music, and I'm not afraid of what you think.' So having some, in some instances, violent imagery is basically saying 'I am not like you, and I am comfortable wearing this kind of stuff' (Emily, 2015, p. 5 grammar unchanged).

Whilst in the sense of traditional social class the battle jacket does not mark its wearer out as elite or aristocratic as heraldry might have done, in another way it can serve to indicate a certain status within metal subculture. The order of customisation is not strict, as it is in biker gangs

(see figure 3.1 and the later discussion in this chapter), yet tacitly understood hierarchies are very real amongst metal fans and are demonstrated through jacket elements.

An obvious example of this is the basic rule that a greater number of patches indicates a deeper commitment to metal, as historically patches were mainly bought at concerts and so acted as markers of experience. In recent years this has been complicated by the easy availability of patches online (see chapter 3), meaning that it is quite possible to have a well-covered jacket without ever having been to a gig at all. This trend is lamented by Pete: 'A lot of them are like brand-new looking jackets with brand-new patches all perfectly sewn on, with massive spaces in between and not much thought put into it' (Pete, 2014, p. 5).

As Pete's comment suggests, another marker of status in relation to jackets is found in the appearance of age and wear (genuine, not manufactured). Because of fashions for worn-look denim, factory fading, stonewashing and distressing (Fiske, 1990b, pp. 15–18) have meant that the difference between genuine wear and artificial 'pre-aged' denim becomes even more important for fans (see figure 4.4).

Status in the metal community might also be gained by displaying allegiance to less well-known bands and particularly extreme metal genres. The logic in this is that one has to be a serious fan (and possibly in a band oneself) to know of these bands, and the 'refined' taste necessary to appreciate the more extreme forms of metal is not possessed by the majority. A metal insider is more likely to understand the references to marginal bands, and so the jacket wearer's status is only truly acknowledged by those who are themselves 'in the know' (Allett, 2013). Thus in several ways the contemporary battle jacket can be read as heraldry – for allegiance and identity, for protection and to confer subcultural status on its wearer.

Folk costume

As figure 4.5 illustrates, there is a rich tradition of British folk costume featuring customisation that shares some common motivations and functions with the battle jacket. The tradition of Pearly Kings and Queens began in the nineteenth century (Swinnerton, 2004, p. 18) and continues to represent an important aspect of working-class identity linked to London boroughs and displayed through handmade costumes.

Figure 4.4: A fan wearing his 'authentically' aged battle jacket, Sonisphere festival, Knebworth, UK, 05.07.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 4.5: A Pearly King wearing his customised suit, 2012. Photograph by J. Pearson-Howes. Available at spitalfieldslife.com

Like the battle jacket, the Pearly costume uses the back of the jacket as a prominent site of display, with buttons spelling out titles and place names as well as a series of common symbols. This practice was thought to have originated from Henry Croft, the original Pearly King, who died in 1930 (Swinnerton, 2004, p. 18). The use of buttons came from market traders, who wore the suits to advertise their wares.

Older British folk costumes can be found in the tradition of morris dancing. It is thought that these costumes have their origins in performances going back to around the fifteenth century (Metcalfe, 2015). Early costumes were initially costly (see figure 4.6), but they gave way to the practice of

customising everyday clothing with bits of paper, feathers, sashes and bells (Metcalfe, 2015, p. 7).

Figure 4.6: Detail showing morris costume from the Betley stained glass window, between 1550 and 1621, © V&A collection. Available at collections.vam.ac.uk

Folk costumes are used in performative situations (see figure 4.7) rather than as everyday attire, and the wearing of the costume serves to locate the performer within this particular ceremonial or festive role (Metcalfe, 2015, p. 5). For some metal fans, the battle jacket can have a similar function in that they mainly wear the jacket to attend metal concerts. For these individuals (who might be thought of as 'weekenders'), the jacket acts like a costume, delineating the performative space of metal within their life and separating it from other activities and identities. Paul views his jacket in this way: 'I'll certainly wear it to an event like this … I'll probably wear it to some gigs when I go to London' (Paul, 2014, p. 6, grammar unchanged). Outside the space of the metal event, Paul feels his jacket would be inappropriate: 'nowadays I'm kind of, much more easy going with the whole metal thing, well I have to be I mean, I don't think

they'd accept it in the office if I just came in …' (Paul, 2014, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

Figure 4.7: Morris dancer in contemporary costume at Braunston Canal Festival, 2007, photograph. Available at www.phoenix-morris.co.uk

For other fans, however, their jackets are everyday garments rather than costumes. They view metal as their primary identity and thus wear their jackets most of the time. This is the case for Nick, a truck driver, who describes the positive reactions he gets from wearing his jacket at work: 'I can literally deal with 200 people a day, going from different warehouses or stores or wherever, there are "unexpected metalheads" everywhere.

And I get a lot of positive reactions from my customers' (Jenna and Nick, 2015, p. 7, grammar unchanged).

There are clear visual relationships between folk costumes and battle jackets. Both are embellished and customised by the wearer, following certain conventions but allowing for personal choice and expression in particular details. Both can be seen as expressions of working-class identity in more or less explicit ways. In the example of the Pearly costume, text is used to confer particular values (of locality) on the wearer, whereas in the battle jacket, band logos act in a similar way to identify the fan with the values symbolised by the music. In the contemporary incarnations of morris costumes, similarities can be found in customisation with badges and patches (figure 4.7), which may commemorate morris events in the way that metal band patches can signify attendance at concerts.

Military uniforms

Without seeking to trace a detailed history of military dress I suggest that aspects of uniforms, particularly insignia displayed on patches and banners, have origins in heraldry. Regimental banners often feature coats of arms (figure 4.8), simplified versions of which can provide company logos on uniforms (figure 4.9).

Whilst modern combat uniforms are often designed to conceal the soldier, insignia and rank patches have enduring importance in identifying them, particularly to friendly troops. Thus the heraldic motif persists in modern warfare and is a potent symbol to those on the battlefield. Military imagery and has long been an influence on heavy metal culture (see for example the artwork for Megadeth's *So Far, So Good … So What!* (figure 4.10) and Watain's 'Black Metal Militia' (figure 4.11). This connection is also identified by fans, as Emily comments on her decision to feature an AK47 pin badge on her jacket:

Figure 4.8: Regimental colours incorporating heraldic arms, The Queen's Own Regiment The Buffs. Available at thequeensownbuffs.com

Figure 4.9: Regimental cap badge, The Queen's Own Regiment The Buffs. Available at www.britishmilitarybadges.co.uk

> I just happened to be on the Mall in Washington DC and there was this war veteran guy selling pins, and I was like 'It's perfect for thrash.' I mean, you think about thrash it's like che che che (percussive noise) you know, it's very fast and that was why (Emily, 2015, p. 4, grammar unchanged).

As in the examples below, band patches often bear similarities to their military counterparts, with particular reference to the gothic fonts and monochrome emblems of World War II emblems (figures 4.12 and 4.13). Owen Coggins (2015) has observed a similar relationship in his study of the predominance of blackletter fonts in metal band logos and their origins in gothic script and German military insignia. Metal band patches often feature a simplified version of the band's album artwork, perhaps reduced in colour to just two or three shades (black, white and red is a common combination), which may be coupled with the band name. This is visually similar to the use of a company insignia and name on a military patch. Metal bands use many symbols with military origin, such as skulls and bones (figure 4.14), animal heads such as wolf or lion (figure 4.11), lightning bolts and weapons.

Figure 4.10: Cover artwork for Megadeth's *So Far, So Good … So What!* album. © Capitol Records. Available at metalrecusants.com

Figure 4.11: Artwork for Watain's 'Black Metal Militia'. Available at watainbmmusdivision.com

Figure 4.12: German military patches (contemporary), photograph. Available at: www.liveauctioneers.com

Figure 4.13: Black metal band patches, photograph. © 2002-2017 Encyclopaedia Metallum. Available at www.metal-archives.com

Figure 4.14: 17th Lancers company cap badge. Available at www.britishbadgeforum.com

One of the fans I interviewed was a soldier. Whilst he certainly viewed his jacket as something he wore during recreational time when attending metal concerts, he had nonetheless featured his company logo patch on the collar of his battle jacket (figure 4.15). It was very interesting in this context to see the direct juxtaposition of metal band patches with a functional military logo. Dave underlines the importance of this for him:

‘That’s got significance that patch, it’s been to war!’ (Dave, 2014, p. 3, grammar unchanged).

Bomber crew jackets

The connection between military uniform and battle jackets is taken a step further in the example of the customised leather jackets worn by bomber crews in World War II (figure 4.16). Here, in place of the officially governed order of the uniform patches, the jacket is customised for the airman on an individual basis. Designs follow a fairly set pattern and tend to feature a woman in a provocative pose (probably related to the plane’s insignia, which would be painted on the nose cone). Around the figure are ranks of bomb symbols, each representing a target destroyed. These echo the ‘kill’ markings often featured on an aeroplane’s fuselage or tail fins (figure 4.17). This function of marking lived experience (in the most awful sense) emphasises that the customisation of the jacket is not mere decoration. There is a grim seriousness about it that is somewhat belied by the apparently light-hearted nature of the imagery and nominal puns employed. In fact, it could be observed that in one sense the function of the bomber jacket is exactly the opposite of that of the battle jacket. The former uses a playful tone and imagery connected with ideas of home and leisure to memorialise a horrific reality. For the latter, violent and threatening imagery is used to represent a subculture which for most is a form of leisure and escape.

Figure 4.15: Dave with his battle jacket (company emblem on lapel right of picture), Sonisphere festival, Knebworth, UK, 05.07.2014. Photograph by Jon Cardwell.

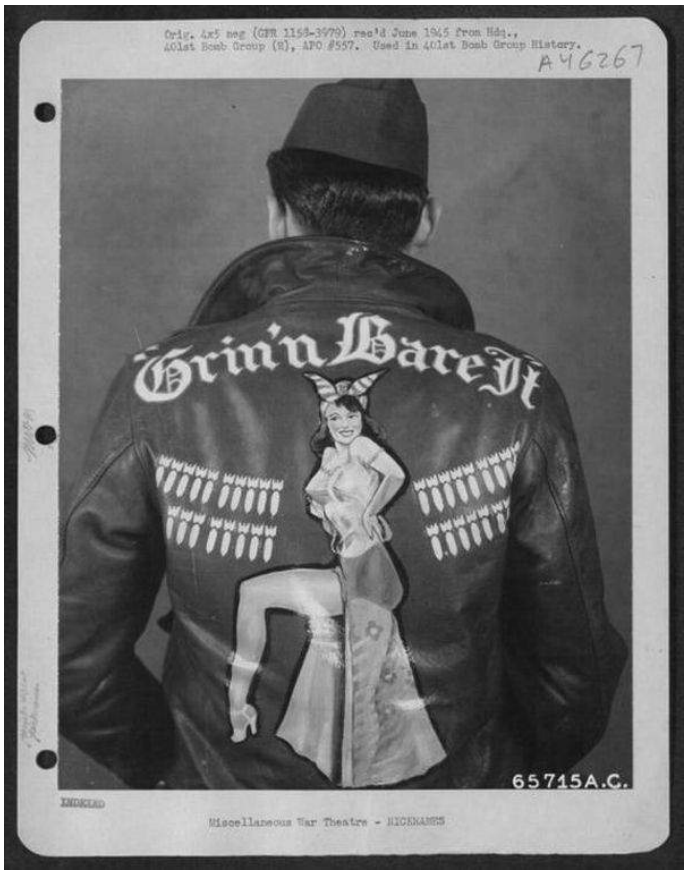

Figure 4.16: Custom painted American bomber crew jacket from 1945, photograph. Available at ideafixa.com

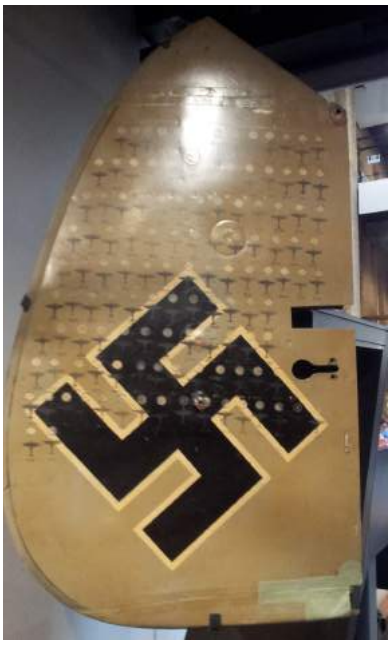

Figure 4.17: Tail fin from a German World War II plane showing 'kill' markings. from the Imperial War Museum collection, London. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

The use of the blackletter font variant (particularly the fraktur typeface favoured by the Nazis) is likewise echoed by metal band logos, as discussed above.

The methods of customisation used on bomber jackets differ slightly from those of the metal fan's patch jacket. Usually designs were hand painted directly on to the leather jacket, and not necessarily by the wearers themselves. There are examples, however, where the main design is cut from another piece and stitched on to the jacket (figure 4.18). Whilst there are variations in type of artwork, words used and precise arrangement of images, bomber jackets largely follow a similar order. The main function of additional symbols seems to be the recording of targets hit or missions flown. Nevertheless, there are clear precedents at work here of the metal fan's jacket and its use as a marker of experience and allegiance. Perhaps a 'bridging' of these differences can be found in the chronologically sequential example of the motorcycle club jacket, to which the battle jacket might be considered most visually similar.

Figure 4.18: Custom painted American bomber crew jacket from 1945, photograph. Available at ideafixa.com

Motorcycle jackets

The last chapter gave a brief summary of the development of motorcycle club jackets. As observed there, the jackets of the 'outlaw' patch clubs follow strict rules of decoration, in a quasi-military fashion (Alford and Ferriss, 2007, pp. 86–87; Dulaney, 2005) (figure 4.19). These jackets bear a resemblance to the bomber jackets discussed previously, in that they feature a large emblem in the centre of the back panel of the jacket, with text above and below this image. Additions may be added to the biker's jacket, such as a territory patch or 1% diamond (Vick, 2015) (see chapter 3). The front of the jacket may also feature identification and rank patches (figure 4.20). The formation of outlaw clubs by returning military servicemen explains at least in part the similarity to military uniforms in this order. Not all motorcycle jackets are as strictly ordered as these examples, however. The 1950s subcultures of rockers and 'ton-up' boys provided an opportunity for bikers to bring a more personal level of customisation to their leather jackets (Stuart, 1987, Friedrichs, 2012) (figure 4.21). As well as hand painting, these jackets featured numerous metal badges, chains, embroidered 'run' patches and other items such as horse brasses.

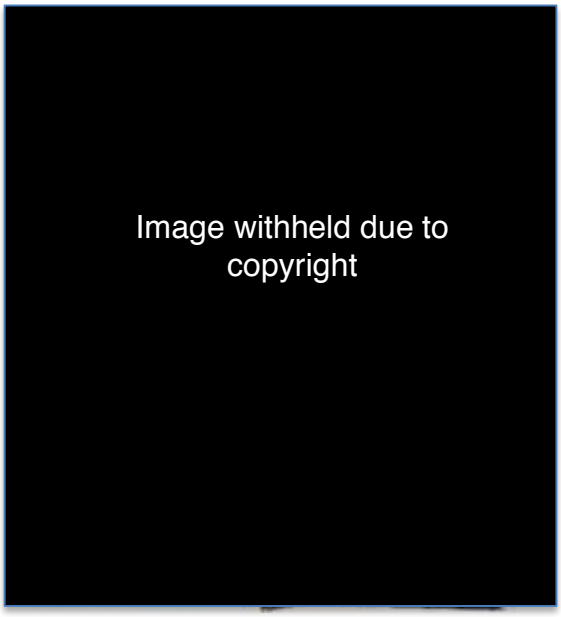

Figure 4.19: 1960s Hells Angels Jacket, photograph from Smithsonian Archive. Available at www.pinterest.com

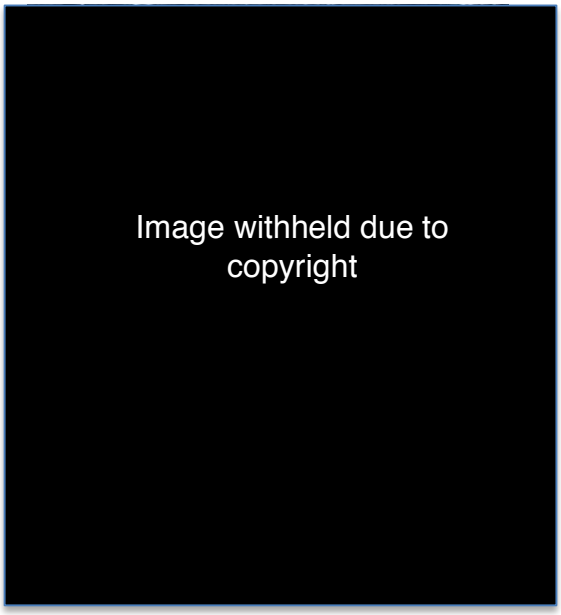

Figure 4.20: Detail of patches on front of Hells Angels jacket, photograph. Available at www.flickr.com

Figure 4.21: A rocker's customised jacket, 2001. Photo copyright by Horst A. Friedrichs Image from the book *Pride and Glory , The Art of The Rockers' jacket.* Available at fashion.telegraph.co.uk

As subcultures multiplied and diverged in the second half of the twentieth century, so customised jackets were taken up by various youth movements as external identifiers (Hebdige, 1979, Polhemus, 1994). The punk emphasis on DIY and customisation brought a new iteration of the motorcycle jacket, embellished with hand-painted band logos, studs and chains (Spitz, 2010) (figure 4.22). Just as the development of 1980s metal music styles such as thrash were closely intertwined (at least in the USA) with punk (Weinstein, 2000, p. 49), so the punk spirit of customisation probably contributed to the development of the battle jacket during this decade, as it developed a distinct place within metal subculture, rather than being just a relocated biker jacket as it seems to have been in the 1970s (see chapter 3, p. 5).

Figure 4.22: Customised punk jacket, photograph. Available at www.vice.com

Football jackets

In Europe, particularly in Germany, the practice of customising cut-off denim jackets is not confined to metal fans. Football supporters also decorate jackets with badges and pennants from their favourite team (figure 4.23). Clearly, the mode of customisation here is very close to that of the metal fan's jacket, with a semi-structured arrangement of patches deployed around a large central patch. The large patch in figure 4.23 is in fact a supporter's pennant that has been adapted to serve as the equivalent of the heavy metal back patch discussed earlier. This might suggest that the deployment of patches in this way has not yet developed amongst football supporters to the extent that clubs have begun to produce larger patches for sale.

Figure 4.23: German St. Pauli fan's jacket, 2010. Photograph by M. C. Woldt. Available at www.flickr.com

There are noticeable similarities between the types of emblems used by football clubs (such as the skull and bones of St. Pauli in figure 4.23) and some of those featured in metal band patches. Once more, it would seem that these emblems have close connections with heraldry, probably incorporating elements of the arms or crest from the town that the team is associated with. Team sports could also be thought of as representations of warfare, closely linked to territory and nationhood. The use of the football supporter's jacket may in many cases also be similar to that of the metal fan's. Both are primarily worn (at least by some) for attendance at particular events (the match or the concert), so in some sense could be thought of as having a performative function as discussed above in relation to folk costumes. Whilst these events are effectively leisure or recreation activities for most fans, involvement with the subculture of heavy metal or football can nonetheless play an important part in defining an individual's sense of identity that extends beyond just weekends and evenings (Pete, 2014, p. 3). The example of the football jacket shows that the desire to express allegiances as a fan through customised clothing is not just confined to music. However, the practice of using patches to embellish one's jacket is particularly established in heavy metal subcultures.

Summary

The examples presented here are by no means exhaustive. Connections could be found between battle jackets and many other cultural traditions and artefacts. However, these few that have been discussed demonstrate ways in which the heavy metal battle jacket can be situated in a wider 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993) or network of practices of clothing customisation. In all of these examples, ideas of identity, connection to a group, the recording of lived experience and the illustration of narratives can be communicated through the embellished garments. Indeed, the term 'battle jacket' creates connections with warfare, of being a warrior and taking

sides. In metal culture, loyalty to the music and the subculture is very important for 'lifestyle' fans; thus comparisons with military dress have a deeper resonance.

A deliberate sense of historicism is evident in heavy metal culture, and this is visually expressed through the adoption of symbols, typefaces and images from European history, and through references to particular historic events. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that battle jackets should articulate these associations visually, through motifs employed as well as the manner of customisation.

Much has been written about the collapsing of cultural hierarchies in postmodern thought (see for example Collins (1989), Fiske (1990a) and Ross (1989)). The idea that some forms of culture are superior to others has been brought into serious doubt. Even the attempt to frame the question looks increasingly difficult. Thus it is not the intention to somehow give greater weight to the importance of battle jackets within wider culture by suggesting links to more established traditions. Instead, in the manner of Calvino (1977), examples are connected so that one may inform the other and *vice versa*. The readings of each point in this 'map' (see figure 4.1) will change depending on the point from which it is viewed.

In the next chapter, a particular example of a battle jacket will be analysed in detail.

Chapter 5: Contextualising images on battle jackets

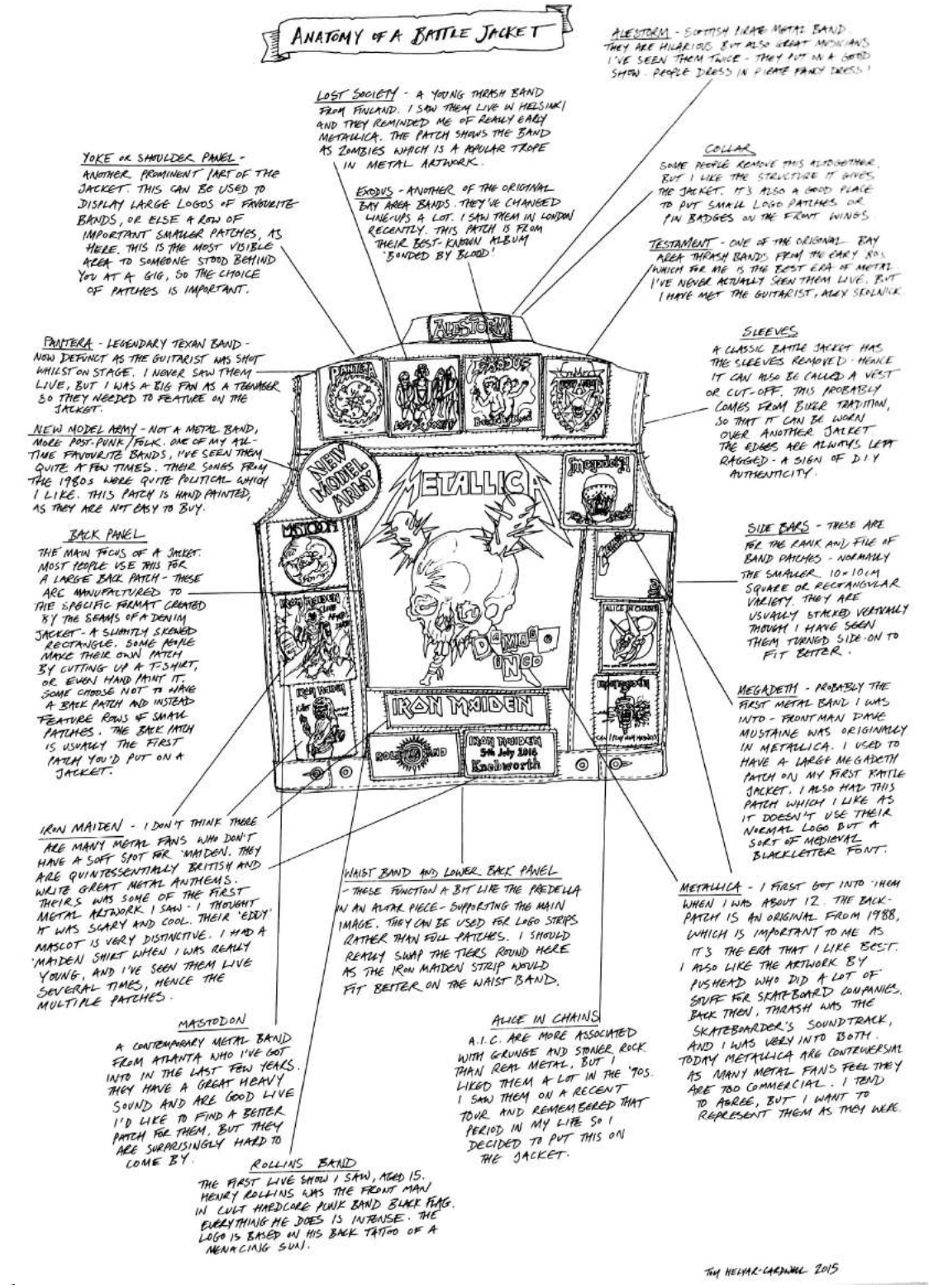

Figure 5.1: Tom Cardwell, *Anatomy of a Battle Jacket,* 2015, drawing, ink on paper, 59 × 42 cm.

This chapter will draw together and elaborate on a number of ideas that have been referred to briefly in previous sections. First, the common structure of the battle jacket will be analysed, showing how this contributes to the way meanings are visually constructed by fans. Second, a selection of images from one jacket will be used as an example of how connections with wider image traditions might be traced and to show how Fritz Saxl's idea of a 'heritage of images' (1970) as well as theories of intertextuality can be useful in understanding these contexts. Finally, having looked at how connections with painting history might give a broader understanding of images in metal culture, I will consider conversely how metal artists have re-appropriated elements of art history in turn, giving new meanings to existing traditions.

The historic structure of the battle jacket

Chapters 3 and 4 looked at the development of the customised jacket in military and popular culture. Underpinning the phenomenon of the battle jacket is the ubiquitous denim jacket that provides a consistent format for customisation. The illustration in figure 5.1 shows how the different sections of the jacket function for the displaying of patches. Whilst the design of denim jackets has gone through a slight evolution since the origins of the garment around 1900, the changes have been relatively minor and the current iteration follows the 'type III' jacket created by Levi Strauss in the early 1960s (Ramos, 2013) (see figures 5.2 and 5.3).

Figure 5.2: ‘Types I, II and III’ trucker denim jackets by Levi Strauss, c.1900, 1953 and 1960s respectively, photograph. Available at www.heddels.com

Figure 5.3: Back view of trucker jacket by Levi Strauss, photograph. Available at www.levi.com

The origins of denim as a work wear fabric (perhaps giving coinage to the term ‘blue collar’) (Fiske, 1990, p. 5) have been discussed previously, as have the connections between heavy metal and working-class culture (Weinstein, 2000, p. 113). Today, these associations are often invoked by denim brands to create an aura of authenticity or ‘heritage’ around their products (Levi’s, 2015). Histories of American denim work wear tend to emphasise the ennobling effects of the garments for their wearers, an argument that plays well with the popular narratives of the USA as a nation made great by honest toil (Marsh, Marsh and Trynka, 2002). Sandra Curtis Comstock (2011) has argued that the valorisation of denim in the popular mind was in large part a result of the Great Depression of the 1930s. In a postmodern remove, the more these associations are emphasised by branding, the greater the distance seems to be between the garments themselves and any working-class roots, either real or imagined. This phenomenon can be seen in the fashion for pre-aged or ‘distressed’ effects on new denim – giving the artificial appearance of marks of hard labour (Fiske, 1990, pp. 15–18) (see figure 5.3). In a further irony, the current tendency for brands to re-make close copies of early denim work wear garments (see figure 5.2) causes these to become highly fetishised and prohibitively expensive collector’s items (Friedrichs, 2014), perhaps unaffordable and irrelevant to any genuine labourer today.

Structure

The panelled construction of the contemporary jacket (based on the Levi’s ‘type III’, see figure 5.2) provides the guidelines for the customisation of the battle jacket. The panel edges serve to map out the territory of the denim into a series of spaces of varying sizes and shapes. This common yet adaptable structure might be compared to the rectangular stretcher that still predominates as the standard format for preparing canvas surfaces for painting. Allowing a comparison between denim and canvas (indeed, the two fabrics may have close origins – early pairs of Levi’s were made from cotton duck (Marsh, Marsh and Trynka, 2002, p. 13)) could

perhaps be read as a dialectic between working- and upper-class codes. In a similar way, the artist Terry Atkinson has made ‘grease paintings’ that play on the bourgeois associations of oil paint (Berger, 1972) and the working-class symbolism of grease as an industrial substance of base production (Motley, 2014).

Back panel

In many ways the large back panel forms the centre of the battle jacket, and is often the first area of the jacket to be customised. This is usually reserved for a large ‘back patch’ featuring a favoured band. The back panel is formed by the borders of the yoke at the top, the waistband at the bottom, and the two side panels, which taper the back panel slightly towards the lower part of the jacket. This distinctive shape,

Figure 5.4: Manufactured back patch to fit jacket back panel, photograph. Available at www.ebay.com

presumably originally created to enhance the fit of the jacket to the torso, has influenced the manufacture of band patches, with many bands now producing pre-made back patches cut to fit this part of the jacket (see figure 5.4).

The back patch usually displays a fan's allegiance to their favourite band. As a general rule, the larger the patch, the greater the esteem in which the band is held by that individual. Thus for many, the choice of back patch is very important, and fans will go to great lengths to find the right patch for this area. Jenna, a Canadian fan, recounts the story of her search for the right back patch:

> I lost my first vest, I didn't even want to wear my second vest because I really wanted a Kreator backpatch, and I couldn't find that Kreator backpatch that I had again. So I didn't even wear it until a couple of friends bought me that Kreator backpatch for my birthday one year, they found it finally (Jenna and Nick, 2015, p. 2, grammar unchanged).

Sometimes fans will make their own back patch, for example by cutting up a band T-shirt (as described in chapter 3). This might be done if they are unable to find a commercially produced patch that they consider suitable. In the following extract, another fan, Pete, describes how he made his own Motorhead back patch, shown in figure 5.5:

> Most back patches that you can buy are shit! They're never the right shape, or they're a little bit too small. I thought, 'Nah. Motorhead's my all-time favourite metal band, I'm gonna do this properly. Now where can I get a really big Motorhead back patch from?' Looking round his room. 'Lots of T-shirts!' So I bought a fresh Motorhead shirt, of exactly the one that I wanted, cut it out, bondaweb nylon sticky stuff, put it on, hemmed the edge, bang! Straight on. That was the first one. Then I built everything around that. You know, start with the back patch. That's the main thing. If you're going to have a battle jacket with only one patch on it, it's got to be a back patch (Pete, 2014, pp. 4–5, grammar unchanged).

Some fans eschew the back patch altogether, preferring to populate the back panel with groups of smaller patches (see figure 5.6), although this is more unusual. The back panel, then, can be thought of as the centrepiece of the narrative of the battle jacket. It is the beginning and the reference point for the rest of the jacket. Rather like the centre panel of a Renaissance altarpiece (figure 5.7), it promotes the chief object of devotion, around which lesser or supporting objects circulate.

Yoke

The yoke of the jacket is also a prominent place to display patches, and thus is often used to advertise favourite bands. In recent years manufacturers have begun to produce large logo patches designed specifically for this area of the jacket (figure 5.8). These tend to feature the band name only, and are designed to be seen at a distance. Such patches are perhaps a descendant of the ‘top rockers’ made famous by the Hells Angels and other bike clubs (see chapter 3). In a concert crowd, the shoulders are often the only part of the body that are visible to those standing behind, making this a significant area of the jacket for display. The yoke also has the function of framing the back of the jacket and is usually the longest horizontal part of the jacket, making it ideal for a large logo or a series of smaller patches. Acting as a kind of lintel, the yoke is often used for a band that the fan views as very important, but perhaps slightly less so than the one displayed on the back patch. In the example seen in figure 5.8, there is a strong suggestion that the band Sacred Reich are a favourite of this fan, as the large logo on the yoke is echoed by a smaller artwork patch to the bottom right of the jacket.

Figure 5.5: Pete's jacket showing custom-made Motorhead back patch, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire, UK, 10.08.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 5.6: Eleanor and Jemima's jackets featuring small patches on back panels, Sonisphere festival, Knebworth, UK, 05.07.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 5.7: Andrea Mantegna, Altarpiece of San Luca, 1453–1454, painting on panel, 177 x 230 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Available at en.wikipedia.org

Figure 5.8: Battle jacket featuring a large logo patch on the yoke, Sonisphere festival, Knebworth, UK, 05.07.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Side panels

Whilst less prominent than the back panel or yoke, the side panels of the jacket can play host to a 'supporting cast' of other band patches. These might feature bands that a fan admires or has seen in concert, or they may reiterate support for one or two particular bands that feature in more prominent positions as well (see figure 5.9). These panels bear comparison once more with the altarpiece, where small panels around the sides may contain scenes from a narrative, such as the passion of Christ or the life of a saint (see figure 5.10).

Figure 5.9: Battle jacket devoted to Iron Maiden, O2 London, UK, 06.2013. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 5.10: The St. Margaret altarpiece, polychromed carving, c.1520, V&A. Available at www.vam.ac.uk

In the case of the Iron Maiden jacket seen in figure 5.9, the patches could be interpreted as forming a related narrative as a whole, featuring scenes from the 'life' of the band's mascot, 'Eddie the 'Ead', which in turn is a form of avatar for the band themselves. 'Eddie' has featured on every Iron Maiden cover since the band's debut album, for which he was created by artist Derek Riggs. Although a variety of artists have been employed over the years, the character of Eddie has remained a constant, even if his guise changes somewhat. Just as Iron Maiden's music often refers to famous historic events and characters (ancient Egypt, Alexander the Great, the Battle of Britain, etc.), so the artwork sets Eddie in diverse time zones and locations to fit with the songs (Spracklen, 2015, pp. 108–109). Fans who are familiar with the band will also recognise a chronological journey through the band's career on a jacket like this, starting with the artwork for the early release *Killers* (yoke patch, second from right), in which Eddie was depicted as a zombie metal fan on a London street, through the fantasy world of the *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* album (patches for singles 'The Clairvoyant' and 'Can I Play with Madness' show Eddie as a magician and then as a disembodied head (side panels left, third patch down, and right, second and third patches down respectively)),

to the futuristic 'Blade Runner' setting of *Somewhere in Time* (featuring Eddie as a cyborg, bottom of jacket and far left edge). On the back patch here, Eddie visits hell where he battles and ultimately defeats Satan, making a puppet of him. The most recent patches, such as that for *The Final Frontier* (top left of back patch) feature Eddie as a stylised robot warrior head. Read in this way, the side panels thus perform an important role in recording the journey of the band, the themes of the music and the fan's on-going support and attendance at successive concerts over the band's long career.

Sleeves

On most battle jackets the sleeves are conspicuous by their absence, having been removed to form the distinctive vest style. This practice probably comes from biker jackets, where the denim vest is often worn over a leather jacket, making sleeves awkward and unnecessary. It may also be linked to the custom amongst some fans of ripping the arms off T-shirts, which Deena Weinstein suggests might be a way of communicating physical strength and toughness (2000, p. 131). Whatever the origins, ripping off sleeves has become *de rigueur* for battle jacket wearers. John Fiske (1990) interprets the deliberate customisation and distressing of denim by the consumer as symbolic resistance against capitalism (refusal to buy new clothes) and an attempt to reclaim some power in the exchange and valuing of commodities (pp. 14–15). The practice also emphasises that the primary role of the jacket is display rather than warmth. If sleeves are left attached, they are also used as a chance to display further patches (see figure 5.11).

Collar

Figure 5.11: Battle jacket with sleeves left attached, photograph. Available at www.ebay.com

Figure 5.12: Battle jacket with collar and sleeves removed, Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire, UK, 10.08.2014. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Sometimes the collar of the jacket may be removed as well as the sleeves (see figure 5.12). Where it remains, it is often the site of small logo patches, perhaps on the back of the neck (although these might be obscured by long hair). The lapels are also used to display patches, or sometimes pinbadges that will only be noticed by those talking to the wearer directly.

Jacket front

Due to the central fastenings (buttons and holes) that divide the front of the jacket and the chest and hip pockets, the front of the denim jacket does not offer the same expanses for display as the back. It is also seen most clearly by those who are approaching or in conversation with the wearer, rather than those standing at a distance. In this sense it could be likened to the 'private' painting sometimes painted on the reverse of a more public work, to be seen by friends of the owner only. It therefore tends to feature mostly small patches (see figure 5.12), sometimes echoing larger patches of the same bands that feature on the back. Whilst still important, these patches may not have such 'pride of place' for the wearer. The front may feature patches of bands that rank lower down in the fan's esteem, although this is not necessarily the case, and not many fans would wear patches of bands they did not like! Sometimes, the front and back of the jacket are ascribed different themes by the wearer, as Tony describes: 'On the front, I really went for attitude' (Tony, 2014, p. 3, grammar unchanged).

Waistband

Whilst the waistband at the bottom of the jacket may seem an insignificant feature, it serves as a lower border for the composition of the jacket, particularly on the back. Although it is narrow, it may be used to feature a row of small patches, acting like a predella (see figure 5.13). The

waistband may also feature smaller logo strip patches, which are sometimes manufactured particularly to fit in this space on the jacket.

Figure 5.13: Carlo Crivelli, altarpiece with predella showing scenes from Christ's passion, painting on panel,1468, San Silvestro at Massa Fermana. Available at en.wikipedia.org

Customisation of the jacket structure

Whilst the battle jacket format is fairly consistent from one jacket to another, some customisation of the structure does occur. The most common modifications are those mentioned above – the removal of sleeves and possibly the collar. Some fans also choose to remove or cover up pockets and buttons to maximise space for patches (see figure 5.12). In a few cases, more extensive customisation might occur, as in this example given by Pete (see figure 5.5):

> I've re-tailored this anyway. I've actually had this to pieces and fitted it to me. I've modified it, so I've got press-studs on it now, snap-clips. So these are much better than buttons. Buttons get in the way, you can knock them and all that. I've got adjusters on the back so I can have it in summer mode, where it's on if it's a T-shirt,

> and I can let it out in the winter, when I've got other stuff underneath it, it always fits (Pete, 2014, p. 6, grammar unchanged).

Parallels between the battle jacket and the altarpiece

Several clear parallels can be drawn between the visual structure of the battle jacket (in terms of both the denim jacket and the arrangement of patches on it) and the Renaissance altarpiece.[18] Both tend to feature a prominent central image that is invested with particular importance through its size and placement – the centre panel of the altarpiece and the back patch of the battle jacket. Surrounding this central feature are ordered arrangements of smaller scenes, which in the case of the altarpiece usually bear direct narrative relevance to the centre panel. Whilst the battle jacket may not feature such a direct narrative, it is still possible to 'read' the combination of patches in a number of ways: as markers of the fan's taste and experience, as a series of interrelated themes and ideas presented visually through the various band logos and artworks, and sometimes as the charting of the development of the music of one or two particular bands, as in the example of the Iron Maiden jacket given above (see figure 5.9). Both jacket and altarpiece may be based on a predella strip (see figure 5.13), showing smaller scenes or logos that relate to or reinforce the main theme. Finally, each arrangement is framed in some way – the altarpiece by a custom-made frame; the jacket by the choice of patches on the yoke, side panels and collar.

Exploring images and symbols on a battle jacket

[18] The links between the visual arrangement of the jacket and the altarpiece might be thought of as emblematic of the connection between Western Christianity and heavy metal. Even if metal is not often thought of as a Christian music form, there are many connections in terms of subject matter, even if in the negative sense. From the early 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' (Iron Maiden, Mayhem, etc.), Christian imagery (e.g. the devil and angels, good and evil) featured prominently, and continue to do so. For a detailed discussion of the subgenre of Christian heavy metal, see Moberg (2013).

In this section, a case study of a particular jacket will be used to show how the images and symbols it contains can be explored and expanded, suggesting links with other examples both in subculture and in art history. For this case study I have chosen to use my own jacket (see illustration in figure 5.1), which has been constructed in recent years but is based on jackets I created as a young metal fan, and features many of the same bands, and in some cases the same patches. Most of the bands featured on this jacket are well known (at least to metal fans) and similar patches feature on many jackets. In this sense, my jacket is fairly typical of someone who primarily listens to 1980s-era Bay Area thrash and some British heavy metal, as well as a few more recent bands. I will not analyse every image or every patch, but instead will choose effective examples from the jacket.

Saxl's heritage of images

In *Continuity and Variation in the Meaning of Images* (1957) Fritz Saxl argued that symbolic images persist and recur through artworks of various times and cultures since ancient civilisation, disappearing for a time before emerging in a new guise, perhaps with new meaning:

> Images with a meaning peculiar to their own time and place, once created, have a magnetic power to attract other ideas into their sphere; that they can suddenly be forgotten and remembered again after centuries of oblivion (Saxl, 1970, p. 14).

Saxl's hypothesis would suggest that there are visual connections through images from diverse times and cultures, and that artists often borrow and appropriate from existing types in order to say something of relevance to their own culture (see chapter 2). This way of interpreting the products of culture is built on the idea of influence – that one artist or culture has a way of seeing or knowing about the products of another, even if at a fairly subliminal level.

The following case study will draw on this model of analysis, using Saxl's approach as a rationale to support the inference of connections between the images found on a battle jacket and related images from a range of traditions. It cannot be categorically 'proved' that one image or chain of images influenced another in this way, but it is enough to see a relationship in a retrospective sense, as we can not usually know for certain whether or not the artists involved in making each example were aware of these patterns.

Intertextual readings

Theories of intertextuality developed during the twentieth century and have significantly influenced methodologies of interpretation of many cultural forms, not least visual artworks. Building on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes (1977) argued for a radical challenge to traditional notions of authorship in texts, suggesting that meaning was always contingent on context, produced through the constantly shifting relationship of symbols in an overall framework of language. For Barthes, 'the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture' (Barthes, 1977, p. 4). A different emphasis was given by Julia Kristeva (1980) (who coined the term 'intertextuality'), drawing on the work of Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin to argue for an understanding of intertextuality as rooted in social and temporal conditions. In this version, meaning is again very much contingent, but upon the particular material conditions in which the text is spoken, received and interpreted. Language is not a closed abstract system as it is for Barthes.

Whilst these theories ostensibly deal with the written or spoken text, they have been recently applied to a wide range of visual culture, following Saussure's system of semiotics, 'the life of signs within society' (Saussure, 1974, p. 16). Visual culture might thus be 'read' as a text, with constantly

shifting meanings dependent on the place of images within wider image traditions, or particular socio-historic situations. As Wendy Steiner argues, intertextuality may be a useful way to discuss contemporary paintings:

> It is only by viewing paintings in light of other paintings or works of literature, music, and so forth that the 'missing' semiotic power of pictorial art can be augmented – which is to say that the power is not missing at all, but merely absent in the conventional account of the structure of art (Steiner, 1985, p. 58).

In discussing visual cultural forms, then, much light might be shed by examining examples in relation to other images. In the following section examples of particular artworks from one battle jacket will be considered in this manner.

Battle jacket case study

This jacket (figure 5.14) features patches from a number of established metal bands, as well as a few punk/hardcore bands. The two bands most heavily represented on the jacket are Metallica and Iron Maiden, arguably two of the most well-known and commercially successful of all metal bands (Puri, 2014). Both of these bands feature on several patches, and Metallica are prominently represented on the back patch. The multiple patches signify that these have for a long time been my two favourite metal bands, and I have seen both live on several occasions. Another notable band is Megadeth, who with Metallica were part of the Bay Area thrash metal movement that began in the early 1980s and gave rise to the 'big four' thrash bands – Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer and Anthrax. Other bands from this scene are also featured on my jacket, such as Exodus and Testament, as well as more recent bands influenced by this style and sound such as Lost Society. Although not part of this scene and producing a distinctly different style of metal, Iron Maiden are close contemporaries of Metallica and many of the other bands, and there are many

comparisons between their careers and fan bases (Puri, 2014; Spracklen, 2015). As this jacket is in some ways a re-creation of my earlier jackets, I have tried to represent these 'original' bands, and where possible to source original issue patches. The Metallica *Damage Inc*. back patch and small patch are from 1987 and 1986 respectively, and several of the Iron Maiden patches are from the band's original tours for the respective albums during the 1980s (*Killers*, *The Number of the Beast*, *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* and *Live After Death*).

Back patch: Metallica, *Damage, Inc.*, 1986/1987

This patch (figure 5.15) is the centrepiece of the jacket, chosen because Metallica were one of the first metal bands I ever listened to. This patch features the artwork for the song and tour *Damage, Inc.*, from the band's third album, *Master of Puppets* (1986). The artwork is by the American graphic artist Brian Schroeder, known as Pushead, who has done many record covers and T-shirt designs for the band, and whose style has become closely associated with Metallica's music (Monocle, 2015). The image depicts a stylised human skull, with the lower jaw removed. The canine teeth have been extended and pointed to give the appearance of fangs.

Figure 5.14: Case study battle jacket, embroidered patches on denim jacket made by the author. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 5.15: Screen printed back patch for Metallica's *Damage, Inc.,* 1987. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Two spiked clubs, themselves apparently formed from bones, have been violently thrust through the skull to form an X shape with the skull in the centre. This arrangement seems to be a kind of macabre crest or coat of arms, as the crossed clubs with the skull on top of them echo a common form from heraldry. The band's logo is emblazoned across the top of the image, and the words 'Damage Inc.' appear in the bottom right, in a typeface that recalls the anonymous ransom note formed from torn-up newspaper characters. The whole image is pervaded with a sense of barbaric violence; indeed the motif recalls the grisly trophies constructed by barbarian armies. The stylised skull is a common feature of Pushead's work, and similar devices appear in his artwork for Zorlac Skateboards (figure 5.16) (Zorlac used this design for a special edition skateboard deck

for Metallica) as well as in other artwork for the band (figure 5.17). The skull is arguably one of the most pervasive images in heavy metal culture, to the point that it has possibly lost any real shock value that it once had. The distortions and mutilation portrayed in Pushead's images do, however, give these works a sense of violence and menace. There are many other well-known metal covers featuring skulls, from that of the Misfits (figure 5.18) (which was taken from the poster for the 1946 horror film *Crimson Ghost*, reworked in a series of drawings by Banks Violette (see chapter 2)) to Slayer's *South of Heaven* (figure 5.19).

Figure 5.16: Pushead, artwork for Zorlac Skateboards, printed poster, date unknown. Available at www.hoodedutilitarian.com

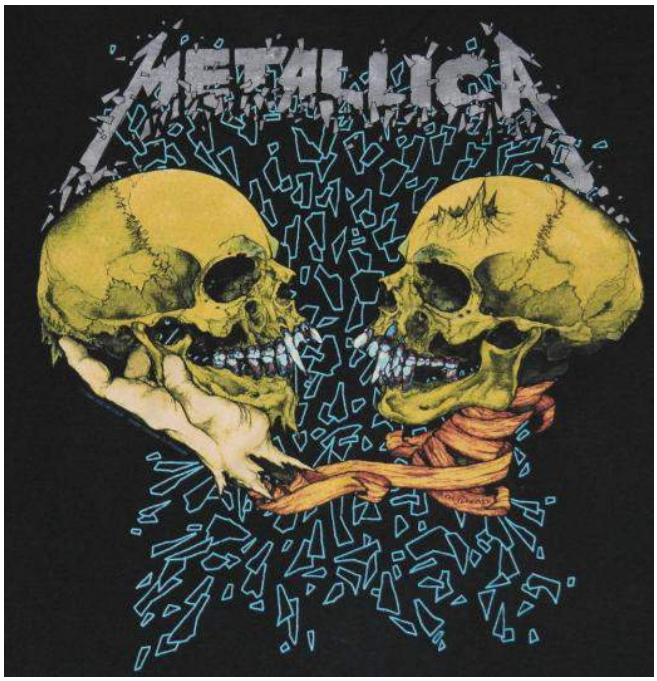

Figure 5.17: Pushead, artwork for Metallica's *Sad but True,* screen print on t-shirt, date unknown. Available at www.defunkd.com

Figure 5.18: Misfits' logo artwork based on the image from *Crimson Ghost,* screen print, date unknown © Misfits 2017. Available at www.polyvore.com

Figure 5.19: L. Carroll and H. Schwartzberg, 1988, album cover for Slayer's *South of Heaven,* illustration © Slayer 2017. Available at en.wikipedia.org

Skulls in paintings – *vanitas* and *memento mori*

As well as on the heavy metal album sleeve, skulls can often be found in the art gallery as they occur commonly in paintings, particularly as *memento mori* or *vanitas* emblems.

The theme of the *vanitas* (and, by extension, the skull motif) has its roots in antiquity; Charles Sterling (1959) points to mosaic examples (under the guise of the *Mors Omnia Aequat* – see figure 5.20) recovered from the ruins of Pompeii. A development of the device can then be sketched, in Sterling's historiographic tradition, until reaching its full and familiar fruition in the virtuosic still life renderings of the Dutch masters (figure 5.21).

As Saxl suggests, such popular motifs can effectively evolve and are heavily dependent on cultural context for their received meaning. The image of the skull can be seen to emerge and develop at various points in the history of culture, apparently with a broadly comparable received meaning. However, as developments in twentieth-century theory have shown, transmission of symbolic meaning is no simple matter, and the

Figure 5.20: *Mors Omnia Aequat*, Pompeian mosaic, first century BC. Available at pre-gebelin.blogspot.co.uk

mechanisms by which it takes place are problematic and shifting. *Iconography*, the methodology of reading works of art as palimpsest-like layerings of finely nuanced meaning, was exemplified by Erwin Panofsky, whose analytic method has had profound influence. Panofsky emphasised the importance of context in reading works of art, positing the work as standing at the centre of, and being inseparable from, an intricate web of cultural, historical and social interstices that are vital to its reception. As Donald Preziosi writes, 'The Panofsky analysis makes it clear that the meaning of the work is a complex function of its position in a field of cultural production' (Preziosi, 1998, p. 232). Thus the theme of the skull in antique and Renaissance art is reinvigorated by more recent examples. As artists began to reference popular culture during the twentieth century, so the uses and meanings of skulls as symbols, both traditional (moral) and

countercultural, began to oscillate. In our contemporary context, the meanings attached to the skull motif are manifold and constantly evolving. The skull may still carry a clear message of danger or death, such as in the warning sign on hazardous substances, in industrial areas and minefields, or as a military or pirate emblem.

Figure 5.21: Adriaen van Utrecht, *Still Life with a Bouquet and Skull,* oil on canvas, 1643, private collection. Available at en.wikipedia.org

The use of the *totenkopf* as a symbol of deadly threat by the Nazis (and previously in German armies since around 1808) arguably lends enduring association to the symbol (Hølscher, 2013). Such meanings are referenced with new inflection in the Hells Angels winged skull – a symbol of serious threat that has also become a fashionable emblem (although the Hells Angels do not allow direct reproduction of their logos). The strong influences of subcultures on mainstream fashion since the 1950s (Hebdige, 1979; Polhemus, 2010) have caused skull iconography from biker and music subcultures to be taken up by a wider demographic. Arguably, the skull emblem displayed on a fashionable T-shirt or jacket

probably does not carry a literal message of threat. Instead, it refers to the excitement and sense of danger associated with these origins. The wearer may enjoy the associations of outlaw values and a sense of aggressive individuality, but these are held at a remove. The real skull motif is distanced, held in quotation marks.

In metal subculture, the skull is used in a range of ways. Often it is employed in the latter sense discussed here – in parentheses, a reference to evil, danger, threat, but not at a literal or serious level. In some ways the skull (particularly in common stylised variants) is so ubiquitous in metal imagery as to lose any direct association with its origins. References to danger, threat, outlaw lifestyles and morbid subjects are part of the well-worn rhetoric of the genre. Within certain subgenres, however, a closer connection to the meanings contained within the *vanitas* and *memento mori* might be found.

The death metal subgenre has a particular focus on 'human misery, especially the triad of death, disease, and decay' (Weinstein, 2000, p. 51). Here something closer to the message of the preacher ('Vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas' – 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity' – Ecclesiastes 1:2) might be intended by the image of the skull or bones. Brian A. Bardine, in analysing links to gothic literary characteristics in the lyrics of particular death metal bands, points to examples of this connection, such as in the song 'Damnation' by Morbid Angel (1989): 'Ashes to ashes so I must be / Lost in this misery / There's nothing left for me / I know of no other way / Even death cannot change my ways' (quoted in Bardine, 2015, p. 577). This more meaningful connection to the *vanitas* message in death metal is expressed visually as well, through a predominance of pared-down black-and-white graphics and a DIY aesthetic (see figure 5.22). Skulls feature heavily on album covers, along with bodies, zombies and scenes of slaughter. The current interest in skulls as subjects for artists can in part be explained by an on-going concern with appropriation of popular cultural motifs, Andy Warhol's 1960s series of screen-printed skulls (see figure

5.23) being perhaps the forerunner to the trend. During the 1990s and early 2000s in Britain, this took the form of a rebellious spirit in contemporary artworks, particularly in the YBA movement, exemplified by the works of Jake and Dinos Chapman and Damien Hirst. Hirst's famous diamond-encrusted skull entitled *For the Love of God* (figure 5.24) reanimated the *memento mori* as an embodiment of late capitalist hyper-consumption, selling for a reported £50 million (Sutcliffe, 2007). Such works use the skull motif in a similar way to the metal album cover – as a play between genuine *vanitas* reference and somewhat ironic or horrific pastiche.

Justin Paton picks up on this trend in his discussion of the work of Australian artist Ricky Swallow:

> Swallow has been attracted especially to the anarchic, undead energy that skulls and skeletons exude in popular culture, from the hipster zombies and skeletons in any number of rock videos to the hell-raising, die-hard skaters on Powell Peralta skateboard decks, which he places 'among the most stubborn images in my subliminal source book' (Paton, 2004, p. 68).

Swallow's work has regularly used the human skull as its focus and is obsessively crafted, even deceptively so. The skulls in his pieces are often combined with corporate identity. His *iMan Prototypes* (2001) (figure 5.25) consisted of skulls cast in resin with the colours and detailing of Apple's distinctive iMac computers. *We the Sedimentary Ones/Use Your Illusions Vol. 1–60* (2000) saw the skull miniaturised and cast 60 times in

Figure 5.22: K. Kusi, 2008, Cover for Death Angel's *Sonic Beatdown*, illustration © Death Angel 2017. Available at www.famousfix.com

Image withheld due to copyright

Figure 5.23 (left): Andy Warhol, *Skull,* 1976, screenprint, Tate Gallery, London. Available at www.tate.org.uk

Figure 5.24 (right): Damien Hirst, *For the Love of God,* 2007, platinum skull, diamonds, human teeth, collection of Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. Available at www.damienhirst.com

pigmented resin, the resulting objects being attached to key rings and presented as if in a souvenir shop.

For *Everything is Nothing* (2003) (figure 5.26), he carved a life-size skull from jelutong wood, and encased it in a wooden tracksuit hood emblazoned with the distinctive logo of sportswear giant Adidas. This sense of branding when connected with the human skull could be seen to evoke the ubiquitous corporatisation of modern life, an arena in which even the body can become a site for advertising. To quote Paton once more, 'We are dealing with a sculptor obsessed by objects, and skulls, by outlasting us, make it clearer than any other object that we are objects too' (Paton, 2004, p. 68). This merging of the skull as *vanitas* reminder with the cold objectivisation of the marketplace seems to be echoed in Damien Hirst's work. The combination of this sober, gruesome, rebellious, fashionable icon with the most opulently expensive materials is by no means coincidental. The skull has also been a subject matter for contemporary painters. British painter Nigel Cooke has been using the device in various guises for many years – from the rock face covered with creepers that form a large death's head, which can be missed on first glance (*Silver Morosa*, 2003), to the grinning pumpkin skull (*Morning Is Broken*, 2006), to the numerous small skulls-as-objects that litter the floor of many of his larger works. Darian Leader writes of this feature of Cooke's work: 'Motifs of life and death are present both as explicit icons and as compositional tensions, to make of these works modern variants on the vanitas theme' (Leader, 2006, p. 38).

This series of associations between images of skulls in metal culture and examples from contemporary and historic painting might seem disconnected in some ways. However, it has served to show how such references cross back and forth between cultural and subcultural worlds. Inevitably, as Saxl and Panofsky argued, each new usage changes the lineage as a whole, giving new inflections to tradition.

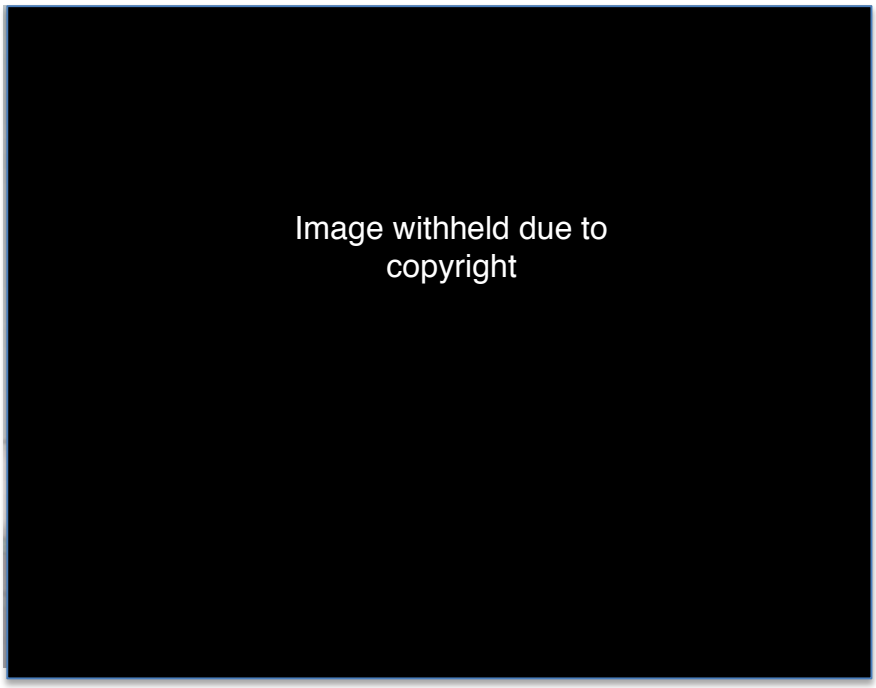

Figure 5.25: Ricky Swallow, *iMan prototypes*, 2001, sculpture, pigmented resin, Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand. Available at www.aucklandartgallery.com

Figure 5.26: Ricky Swallow, *Everything is Nothing*, 2003, sculpture, carved jelutong and milliput, © the artist and Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London. Available at www.pinterest.com

The embracing of mass culture by artists (and vice versa) has in some senses closed the circuit of influence, so that we can no longer be clear about whether the skull in popular culture is based on the skull of art history or the other way round. Such distinctions become difficult to maintain.

In heavy metal subgenres such as death metal and thrash metal, lyrical concerns with death, disease, destruction, environmental disaster and the threat of nuclear war (band names alone invoke these connections in some cases, such as Megadeth, Nuclear Assault, Toxic Holocaust and Municipal Waste) bring a new inflection to the theme of the *vanitas* and the *memento mori*. The skull motif emphasises this connection visually, connecting disparate traditions and oppositional meanings. In this sense both metal music (and imagery) and painting discourse can be thought of as intermediaries, connecting and reinvigorating sources of meaning, and allowing contradictions to be played out against a backdrop of late capitalist material and symbolic consumption.

Iron Maiden 'The Beast on the Road' tour patch

This patch was created to commemorate Iron Maiden's 1982 tour *The Beast on the Road* in support of the album release for *The Number of the Beast* of the same year. The patch depicts the band's well-known mascot 'Eddie the 'Ead', a zombie figure who has appeared in many guises and costumes over the years, but at this early stage was portrayed in the everyday garb of the heavy metal fan – ripped jeans and T-shirt, and long hair (see figures 5.27 and 5.28). In this instance, Eddie is shown standing astride a globe, planting a Union Jack flag in the centre of it. The figure is positioned in a dynamic stance, with the left knee dropped to support the pose, and the right leg planted wide to stabilise the flag. This creates a strong inverted triangular form for the centre of the image, with the flagstaff acting as a visual conduit, leading the eye down the centre of the composition, from the band logo (top right) and the rippling standard

Figure 5.27: Case study battle jacket (front). Embroidered and printed patches on denim jacket, made by the author. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Figure 5.28: Detail of Iron Maiden 'The Beast on the Road' tour patch. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

(top, left of centre). The right arm is bent double and bunched in tightly to the body, receding behind the flagstaff. The left arm is bent to 90 degrees at the elbow and splayed sideways, visually balancing the leg stretched out on the opposite side. A horizontal line can be traced through the right knee and left elbow, roughly bisecting the bottom third of the image. A parallel line can be imagined separating the top third of the image that runs through the top of the Eddie's head. Thus the composition obeys the 'rule of thirds' (Smith, 1797, pp. 15–17). The tension of the pose has the effect of emphasising the flagstaff, which appears to thrust forward out of the picture plane towards the viewer. The whole pose is anchored by the curve of the globe at the bottom, overlaid with the tour title text in a handwritten font, apparently scribed in blood which drips from the letters (a standard stylistic device of horror titles). A sense of movement is created by the suggestion of a rushing wind, demonstrated in the rippling flag which streams out behind the staff, and Eddie's fluttering hair which blows up and back. Some drops of liquid spurt from the globe where the flagstaff meets it, as if the pose is frozen at the moment when the flag is violently thrust into the globe in a claim of victory or sovereignty. This could be read both as a mark of the importance of the band themselves (personified by Eddie), and as a demonstration of national pride (Iron Maiden have repeatedly focused on themes of British identity and military victories such as the Battle of Britain in their lyrics and artwork) (Spracklen, 2015, p. 106). The background of the scene is black, with pinpricks of light and a trailing comet, suggesting that the scene is set in space, with Eddie standing astride the Earth. Once more, this emphasises the band's superiority and a sense of world domination. The artwork for the patch was created by Derek Riggs, who illustrated all of Iron Maiden's covers during this period and is credited with creating the Eddie character for the band's debut album, *Killers* (1981) (Aldis and Sherry, 2006). Visually, the image has connections with historic paintings of military victories, perhaps most notably Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* of 1830 (figure 5.29).

Figure 5.29: Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People,* 1830, painting, oil on canvas, 325 x 260 cm, Louvre, Paris, France. Available at www.wikiart.org

Delacroix painted this scene to commemorate the July Revolution of 1830, and whilst it was bought by the French government the following year, it was soon removed from display due to its revolutionary theme (Wikiart, no date).

Whilst this scene is notably different from the Iron Maiden image in many respects (the latter does not bear comparison as a transcription), there are a number of key similarities. First and perhaps principally, the subject matter is related. Both scenes show a central victorious protagonist bearing a national flag as a symbol of victory and supremacy. Both are dynamic scenes, with carefully composed figures creating dramatic

tension, and movement suggested through rippling fabric, hair and (in the Delacroix) smoke. Delacroix's painting also utilises an inverted triangular shape to centralise and anchor the composition, in this case created through the dramatic use of light falling on the figure of Liberty and on the bodies at her feet. As in the Iron Maiden artwork, there is a clear sense of national pride, visually communicated by the centrality of the national flag, shown as triumphant in battle. Another example of a standard as a central feature of a battle scene can be found in John Singleton Copley's painting *The Death of Major Peirson*, *6 January 1781* (figure 5.30). This depicts the defence of the island of Jersey by British forces (led by Peirson) against the French. Major Peirson is depicted at the moment of his death by a French sniper's bullet (Fowle, 2000).

Figure 5.30: John Singleton Copley, *The Death of Major Peirson*, *6 January 1781,* 1783, painting, oil on canvas, 280 x 390 cm. Tate Gallery, London. Available at www.tate.org.uk

His swooning forms the lower part of a bottom left to upper right diagonal line that is completed by the British flag, held by a soldier in the crowd

behind. Again, the dynamic composition is aided in its sense of movement by the rippling standards and rising smoke. National identity reinforced through military victory is a central theme of this painting as well, and the standard symbolises this. Apparently, the painting caught the popular patriotic fervour of the public when it was displayed in 1783 (Fowle, 2000) and perhaps fittingly featured in Tate Britain's 2015 exhibition *Fighting History*.

Joshua Reynolds' military portrait *Colonel Tarleton* of 1782 (figure 5.31) uses a standard as a patriotic symbol, but in a more subdued manner. Here, the focus is on the portrait of Tarleton rather than a larger scene. He is shown on the battlefield, about to draw his sword, and seems composed in contrast to the panicking horses behind him to the left that are being restrained by a handler. Tarleton's figure is supported visually by a canon projecting from the left, and he stands beneath a furled standard which is thought to be that of the British Legion for which he fought during the American War of Independence (National Gallery, no date). Another flag lies diagonally behind Tarleton's legs, echoing the lower left to upper right diagonals created by the upper flag and Tarleton's sword in the middle of

Figure 5.31: Joshua Reynolds, *Colonel Tarleton*, 1783, painting, oil on canvas, 236 x 145.5 cm. National Gallery, London. Available at www.nationalgallery.org.uk

the composition. This parallel is picked up once more by the angle of Tarleton's torso as he leans forward to grasp his sword.

The flag as post-colonial symbol

In a number of contemporary artworks, the British flag is represented in a more complex way, perhaps in response to more critical attitudes to the nation's colonial past (Hall, 1997, pp. 239–257). Sceptical representation of the British flag is not new and goes back at least to the satirical work of William Hogarth (White, 2010). The Union Jack in particular has become a contested symbol, containing a diverse array of meanings and associations depending on one's vantage point in contemporary British culture (Gardiner and Thompson, 2012). This was evident in the media controversy surrounding British artist Jonathan Parsons' planned installation of a grey and black Union Jack on Norwich castle in 2005 (see figure 5.32), which was subsequently displayed inside as a result (BBC news, 2005). This work was a new version of an original piece that Parsons made in 1993. In 1996, Mark Wallinger made a version of the Union Flag in the colours green, white and orange of the Irish flag, calling the work *Oxymoron* (White, 2010). Themes of post-colonial British identity are at the fore in the work of Hew Locke, another artist who often re-contextualises the symbols of British imperialism, such as the Royal coat of arms. Locke used this device as the basis for the works *Grin and Bear it* and *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (figure 5.33) (both 2004). For Locke, the cultural legacy of such official emblems of Great Britain as a colonial power provides a rich site for reinterpretation. In another work, *King Creole* (2004), Locke combines Pugin's design for the House of Commons portcullis crest with the piratical skull and crossbones. As Locke comments, 'My piece refers to the buccaneering, piratical attitude that has existed in British history as well as the often vicious cut and thrust of debate in the House, and of the real wars that can result' (Locke, 2004).

Figure 5.32: Jonathan Parsons *Achrome,* 1993, sewn polyester flag, wood, rope 100 x 177.5 cm Available at jonathanparsons.com

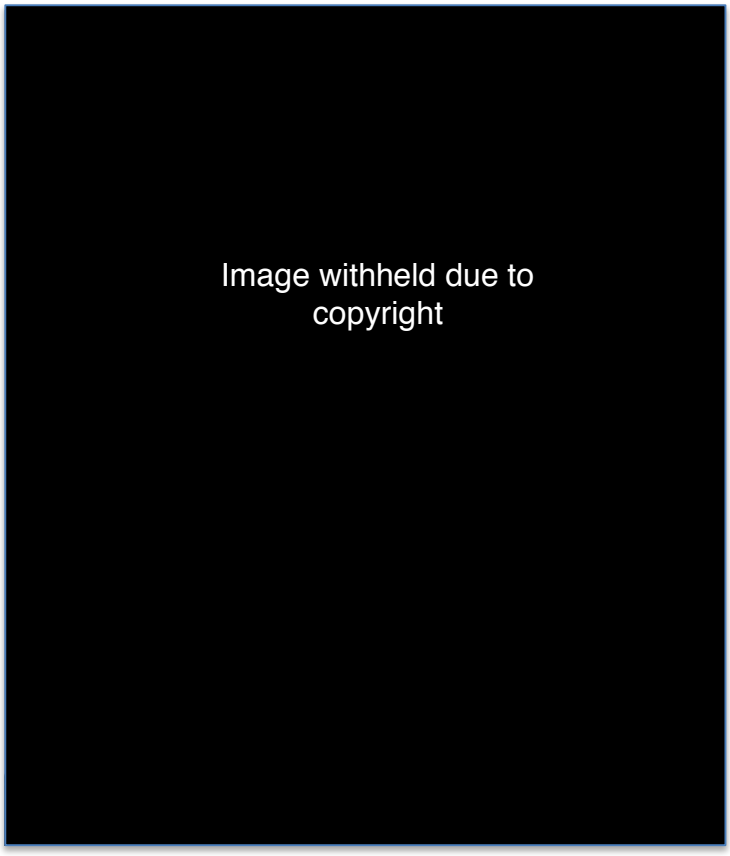

Figure 5.33: Hew Locke *Veni, Vidi, Vici,* 2004, mixed media sculpture, 214 x 244 cm. The Drawing Room, London. Available at www.hewlocke.net

If such works exemplify a nuanced and complex consideration of the symbols of British power, this attitude seems absent in the use of the Union Jack flag in Iron Maiden's artwork. Here, a more traditional (perhaps reactionary?) sense of British pride seems to be at work, in a vein that chimes clearly with heavy metal's predominantly white, working-class fan base (Weinstein, 2000, pp. 111–117). Spracklen (2015) examines the recurring literary and historical references to this sense of British identity:

> Iron Maiden, then, play a key role in the reproduction and maintenance of a particular imagined and imaginary community: the symbolic community bounded by the British Empire, which produces in its turn exclusive versions of hegemonic masculinity, whiteness and belonging
> (Spracklen, 2015, p. 111).

Metallica 'Black Album' patch

Figure 5.34: Embroidered patch featuring cover art for Metallica's 'Black Album'. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

Metallica's eponymous album (also known as the 'Black Album') was released in 1991, marking a new direction for the band musically with cover artwork that broke with established metal traditions for imagery (see figure 5.34). Unlike previous Metallica records that featured detailed

paintings as cover art (see figure 5.35), this album took a new, minimalist approach (new for the genre; clearly other bands had used a similar device before, such as the Beatles with their 'White Album' of 1968 and *Past Masters* of 1988). This departure, both musically and visually,

marked the beginning of an extended period of experimentation for the band as for the next decade they sought to push the boundaries of their signature brand of thrash metal by incorporating a range of diverse influences and experimenting with new musical styles (Puri, 2014, p. 75).

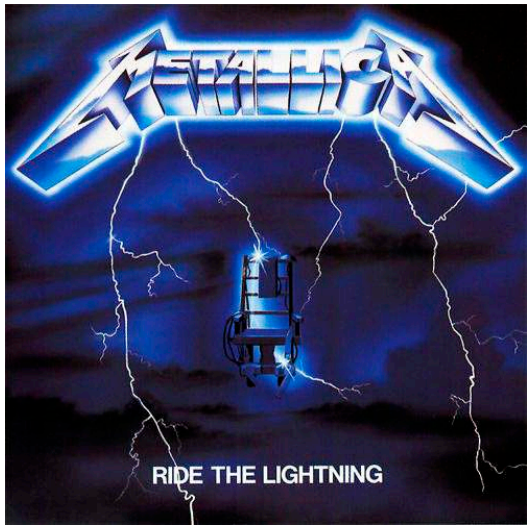

Figure 5.35: AD Artists, cover art for Metallica's *Ride the Lightning* album, illustration, 1984. Available at www.metal-archives.com

The album artwork for the 'Black Album' is devoid of all but the faintest of visual representation. At first glance, it appears to be a solid monochrome black field, with the band logo arranged diagonally across the top left corner (in contrast with the general tendency for bands to emblazon their logos in a banner format across the entire width of the cover top, as in figure 5.35). A closer inspection then reveals a faint line image, in grey, of a coiled snake in the bottom right corner. These two elements – the black

monochrome field and the coiled snake – each have extensive yet somewhat distinct sets of connections to other visual culture, and it is worth treating them separately, at least initially.

The black monochrome, whilst on one level a strange choice for a metal band, may be an attempt to engage in a new way with the longstanding associations of the colour black in metal culture. In their compositional analysis of a series of Scandinavian black metal album covers, Gulden et al. (2015) found darkness and the colour black to be key compositional elements, often accounting for the majority of the visual space of the cover (Gulden et al. 2015, pp. 483–485). Other metal bands have released predominantly black album covers, such as AC/DC's *Back in Black* (1980) and The Damned's *The Black Album* (1980). Metallica's album cover was perhaps most closely prefigured by the cover for the fictional metal band Spinal Tap's *Smell the Glove* album. Spinal Tap were the focus of a spoof 'mocumentary' film released in 1984. In a popular scene from the film, the band's record company ban their planned album artwork considering it too controversial, and replace it with a plain black sleeve. On receiving the sleeve the band are initially dismayed, until guitarist Nigel Tufnel (played by Christopher Guest) decides that this could be an iconic metal cover: 'It's like, "how much more black could this be?" and the answer is "None. None more black" ' (*This is Spinal Tap*, 1984). This reference was not lost on Metallica, who make direct references to *This is Spinal Tap* in their long-form video *A Year and a Half in the Life of Metallica* (1992), which features Guest in character as Tufnel confronting members of Metallica for stealing Spinal Tap's cover idea (*Smell the Glove*, 2016).

The black monochrome in painting

The black monochrome has been widely used in painting, notably in Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) (figure 5.36).

Figure 5.36: Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square,* 1915, painting, oil on linen, 79.5 x 79.5 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia. Available at en.wikipedia.org

Malevich's claim that this work marked the 'zero point in painting' (Mazzoni, 2003) is often referred to in discussions of the history of abstraction, to which the 'Suprematist' programme arguably contributed (Schjeldahl, 2003). The minimalist agenda in painting continued through the twentieth century, furnishing further examples of black monochromes, such as that by Ad Reinhardt from 1963 (figure 5.37).

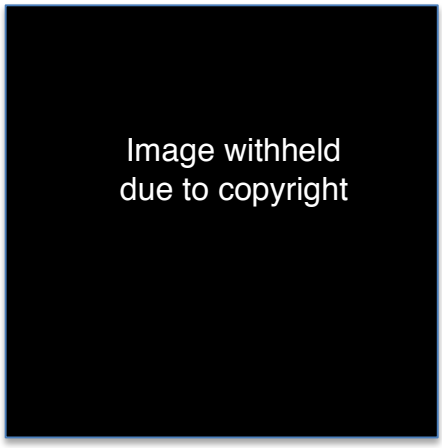

Figure 5.37: Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting,* 1963, painting, oil on canvas, 152 x 152 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. Available at www.moma.org

Reinhardt spoke about his work in absolute terms, seeing it as an enquiry into the essence of painting itself: ‘a pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting – an object that is self-conscious (no unconsciousness), ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art’ (Rose, 1953, p. 83). This quest for an essentialism in painting is perhaps echoed in some ways in the efforts of bands like Metallica to bring metal ‘back to basics’ in the 1990s after the flamboyant excesses of the 1980s (Puri, 2014, p. 75). Thus the use of a minimalist black monochrome cover for the 1991 album can be seen as not just an idiosyncrasy, but a visual expression of a drive to reform in Metallica’s music, and in thrash metal more widely. Indeed, Deena Weinstein has postulated significant parallels between the effects of thrash within metal culture and the Protestant Reformation:

> There is an obvious similarity between speed/thrash’s challenge to heavy metal and the contestation, initiated by Martin Luther and John Calvin, against the Catholic Church. Both movements charged that the established form had become corrupt through extravagance and both supported a return to the essential message, stripped bare of all adornment (Weinstein, 2000, p. 49).

In a related way, Gulden et al. (2015) found that darkness can be used to visually express a conservative agenda in black metal album covers: ‘The compositions and the role of darkness somewhat articulate a sense of conservatism through their strong connections to historic structures and symbols’ (Gulden et al., 2015, p. 490). The claim that there is ‘none more black’ may be in earnest after all.

‘Don’t tread on me’ – the symbolism of the snake

Whilst the cover of Metallica’s ‘Black Album’ is largely monochrome, there is a faint grey line image of a coiled snake in the bottom right corner. This

is more clearly visible on the actual album sleeve (figure 5.38) than it is on the woven patch (figure 5.34). The snake is shown rearing up, supporting its body with three coils stacked vertically which reduce in circumference as they ascend, giving the snake the appearance of being about to strike.

Figure 5.38: D. Brautigam and P. Mensch, cover art for Metallica's 'Black Album', illustration, 1991. Available at metallicablackalbum.wordpress.com

Figure 5.39: C. Gadsden (designer), *The Gadsden Flag,* after original of 1775. Available at www.gadsdenandculpeper.com

This impression is compounded by the open jaw revealing fangs and extended tongue.

The snake bears a very close resemblance to the popular motif found on the 'Gadsden flag' (figure 5.39). Here, a black snake, sometimes patterned, appears on a yellow ground, with the legend 'Don't Tread on Me' below it. The flag is named after its designer, Christopher Gadsden, a general in the American War of Independence who created it in 1775. It was subsequently widely adopted as a symbol of the independent colonies in their stand against British rule (*Gadsden Flag*, 2016). The snake symbol was reportedly based on a political cartoon by Benjamin Franklin from 1751, which depicted eight colonial states as a dismembered serpent. In more recent times the flag has become variously associated with a number of political movements, most notably the Tea Party, and is usually viewed as a symbol of the independent American spirit (*Gadsden Flag*, 2016). If one were tempted to think that the associations of this snake symbol on Metallica's cover might be coincidental, any doubt is removed by the inclusion of a track on the album titled 'Don't Tread on Me' about the War of Independence. The lyrics to the song begin with the couplet 'Liberty or death, what we so proudly hail / Once you provoke her, rattling of her tail' and the chorus contains the lines 'So be it / Threaten no more / To secure peace is to prepare for war' (Hetfield and Ulrich, 1991a). The latter line refers to the Latin motto 'Si vis pacem, para bellum' ('If you want peace, prepare [for] a war') (*Don't Tread on Me (Metallica song)*, 2016). Additionally, the introduction to the song includes a musical phrase from the song 'America', from the musical *West Side Story* (*Don't Tread on Me (Metallica song)*, 2016). Apparently, the flag of the Culpeper Minutemen (a close variant of the Gadsden flag) hung in Metallica's recording studio whilst they recorded the 'Black Album' (Fricke, 1991, p. 6). Interviewed about the lyrics to this song, lead singer and lyricist James Hetfield claimed they came from the band's renewed fondness for the USA (their home country) after the more politically critical stance of lyrics on earlier records such as '… And Justice for All' (1988): 'He contends that "Don't

Tread on Me" is really a reaction to what he now feels was the overzealous anti-American tone of *Justice.* "Like, 'Oh, what a bunch of complainers,' " Hetfield says. "This is the other side of that. America is a fucking good place. I definitely think that" ' (Fricke, 1991, p. 6).

Taken together, the symbolism of the black monochrome and the Gadsden snake might be interpreted as expressing a reformist tendency within Metallica's music and the wider thrash metal genre, and an identification with the popular mythologies of America as a place of freedom and independence. Just as the appropriation of the Union Jack in Iron Maiden's artwork can be viewed as an appeal to mythical historic narratives of the British Empire (Spracklen, 2015), so too Metallica's use of the colour black and the coiled snake symbol reveal associations with similar reactionary narratives of American nationhood and identity (in a selective way). Whilst, as Puri has identified (2014), the stylistic strategies of Iron Maiden and Metallica are quite different (the former as more traditional, the latter as experimental), ideologically and visually their appeals to national identity are quite similar.

Exodus *Bonded by Blood* patch

Figure 5.40: Embroidered patch showing artwork for Exodus' *Bonded by Blood*. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

The artwork for Exodus' debut album *Bonded by Blood* (figure 5.40) shows conjoined infant twins on a fabric ground. The twin on the left has a somewhat monstrous appearance, with pointed ears, claws, fangs and a malevolent smile. He is tearing at the cloth on which he lies. The right-hand twin looks more human by comparison and has a look of fear as he cowers towards the right and seeks to pull himself away from his brother. The apparent message of the artwork is to show a symbiotic relationship between good and evil forces, neither able to exist without the other (*Bonded by Blood*, 2016). The image also draws some shock factor by corrupting the innocent image of infanthood and suggesting that evil can exist even at the inception of life.

Figure 5.41: Detail of Janus from Lorenzo Costa, *The Reign of Comus*, 1507, oil on copper, 152 x 239 cm. Louvre, Paris, France. Available at mini-site.louvre.fr

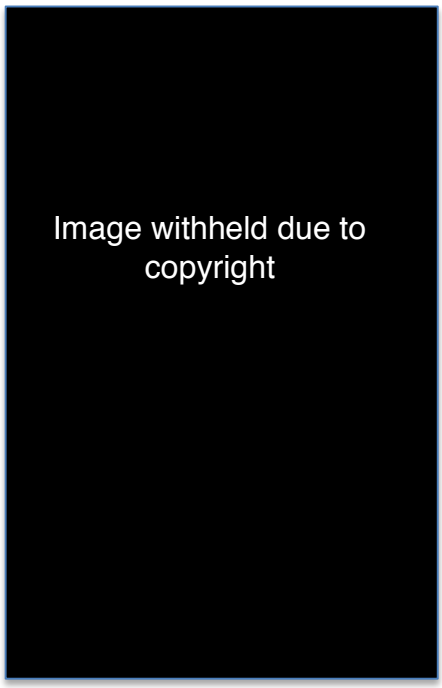

Figure 5.42: Artist unknown, Romanesque sculpture of Janus, marble, SCALA/Art Resource, New York, USA. Available at www.britannica.com

The image of the conjoined twins facing in opposite directions has clear visual connections with the symbol of Janus, the two-faced god of Roman mythology. Janus was associated with beginnings, transitions, endings and doorways, and was also the deity who presided over the beginning and end of conflict (*Janus*, 2016). There are many representations of Janus in ancient and Renaissance art, such as in the painting *The Reign of Comus* by Lorenzo Costa (figure 5.41) and the Romanesque marble relief carving from Ferrara (figure 5.42).

The image of the twins also relates to the Aloeids, the twins Ephialtes and Otus of Greek mythology. These twins attempted to besiege Mount Olympus but were thwarted by the goddess Artemis, who tricked them into killing each other with spears (Graves, 1960, pp. 136–137). An ancient calendar symbol showed the twins back to back, as they sit on the Chair of Forgetfulness. In Italy, this symbol became that of two-faced Janus (Graves, 1960, p. 138).

Other metal bands have used the two-faced Janus image in cover art, such as Paradise Lost with their 2015 album *The Plague Within* (figure 5.43). Here we see a pair of faces created from a pile of bricolaged landscape elements, giving the impression that the heads are part of a hillside. The style of the illustration makes direct reference to medieval line drawings and prints, and brings to mind the etchings of Albrecht Dürer, the monstrous creations of Hieronymus Bosch and the constructed portraits of Giuseppe Arcimboldo. The skull face on the left-hand side implies a *memento mori* symbol – a reminder that death is ever-present, even in life. Combined with the title *The Plague Within*, the message conveyed is similar to that of the Exodus cover – corruption pervades mortal existence and is entwined with life.

Figure 5.43: Z. M. Bielak, cover art for Paradise Lost's *The Plague Within,* illustration, 2015. Available at www.paradiselost.co.uk

The malevolent child in Exodus' artwork also suggests the medieval myth of the changeling (figure 5.44). Changelings were thought to be children who had been swapped by fairies at birth (Briggs, 1976, p. 71), sometimes as an explanation for children born with physical defects.

Figure 5.44: Martino di Bartolomeo, detail of *The abduction of the newborn St. Stephen,* fifteenth century, painting, mixed media on poplar, 75 x 58 cm, © Städel Museum - U. Edelmann – ARTOTHEK. Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main, Germany. Available at en.wikipedia.org

Martino di Bartolomeo's painting (figure 5.44) appears to show a demon taking a child from its crib, leaving a diabolical replacement instead. This is consistent with the artwork of the Exodus patch, images of demons and occult deities being common in heavy metal.

The multi-headed figure is also reminiscent of heraldic motifs, as previously discussed in relation to the work of Hew Locke. Examples from Locke's practice such as *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (figure 5.33) and *Sin Eater* (figure 5.45) show how the artist combines and re-contextualises these historic symbols, giving them unexpected and nuanced inflections. *Sin Eater* combines images of the god Neptune, monkeys, liver birds, monstrous lion-like chimeric creatures and a bust of Sir Foster Cunliffe to create a disturbing and dramatic icon that deals with Liverpool's historic connections to slavery and colonialism (Cork, 2008).

Another visual association with the Exodus cover art can be found in the grotesque morphed and combined mannequin sculptures by Jake and Dinos Chapman, such as *Token Pole* (figure 5.46). These works make reference to genetic mutations and abnormalities as well as to traditions of multi-headed and multi-limbed deities and figures in Indian and African sculpture. Once more, the subject matter seems to be concerned with histories and politics of representation, in this case involving the emotive themes of race, sex and death. In the work of the Chapmans, however, a sinister undertone pervades, and the monstrous is invoked at every turn, as it often is in the genre of metal artwork.

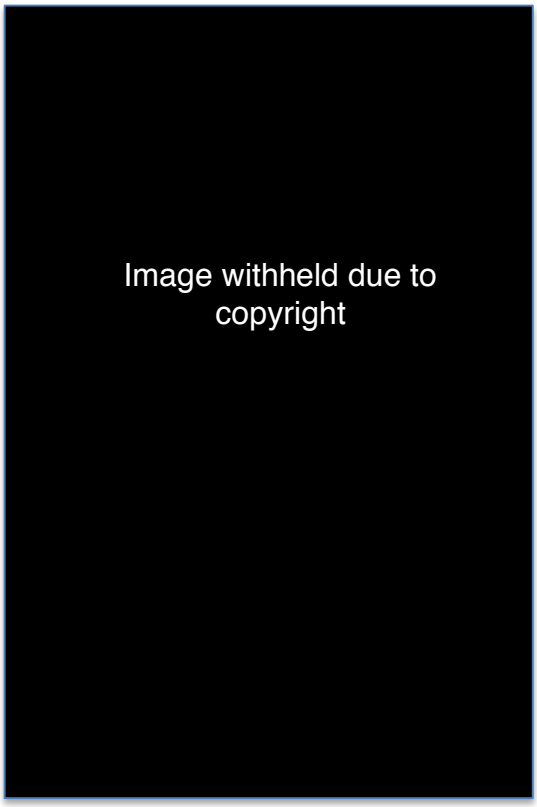

Figure 5.45: Hew Locke, *Sin Eater,* 2008, cord, plastic beads, glue gun, gaffer tape, 650 × 500 cm. The Blue Coat, Liverpool. Available at www.hewlocke.net

Figure 5.46: Jake & Dinos Chapman, *Token Pole,* 1997, sculpture, fibreglass, resin, paint and wigs, 135 x 65 x 65 cm, © Image courtesy of Jake and Dinos Chapman 2017. Available at www.tate.org.uk

Conclusion

The variety of customisation found in battle jacket making depends upon the common framework of the denim jacket, which has remained fairly constant in design throughout the history of the practice. The history of denim garments is closely tied to popular narratives of ennobling manual labour, freedom and independence, particular in America. The branding of denim relies heavily on this rhetoric to market products that have changed little since the early twentieth century. The connections between denim, labour, ideals of freedom and independence, and the development of heavy metal culture are strong. Developing predominantly amongst (often disaffected) white working-class males in the UK and USA, metal has always been aware of its manual labouring and industrial roots. Musically, the style evolved from a combination of blues-based rock and psychedelic music in the late 1960s. All of these traditions have appropriated work wear as visual style signifiers of countercultural values. Contrasts and

commonalities can be observed between denim and canvas, both fabrics that are symbolically charged. On the one hand canvas has been fetishised as a quasi-mythical material that runs through the narratives of painting tradition, with all of the connotations of the romantic artist-genius and the painting itself as a potentially sacred object, as well as a luxury commodity and marker of status. On the other hand, denim, whilst revelling in its humble origins, has evolved under late capitalism to become a luxury fabric in its turn, with 'authentic' copies of early denim garments retailing for large sums and collected by enthusiasts. Both paintings and work wear garments thus become removed from their original contexts through the process of commodification. Just as the rectangular stretched canvas provides a consistent support for painters to experiment upon, uniting the most diverse efforts within the format of the stretcher frame, so the denim jacket acts as a baseline for metal fans to customise according to their musical taste and personal aesthetic judgement.

An examination of the symbols and images on battle jackets reveals connections with a wide range of sources in Western visual culture. Using Saxl's and Panofsky's models of image analysis and contextualisation alongside an intertextual approach allows patterns of influence (at times reciprocal) to be traced between visual sources. Whilst the imagery of metal culture might superficially be associated with countercultural resistance and an attempt to stand apart from the mainstream, a closer analysis of the use of historic and patriotic symbols reveals a tendency towards traditional and conservative values, at least in the cases of established metal bands like Iron Maiden and Metallica.

The discourses of contemporary art tend to treat controversial subjects in a multi-layered, nuanced, non-committal way. Questions are posed rather than answered, and controversy is courted sufficiently to appear edgy, without proffering any proof of intention that might condemn the creator. Metal artwork, by contrast, is less ambiguous, and more direct in its

message and opinions. Colours are pinned to the mast, sometimes literally. However, when the images of the metal album are viewed alongside related artworks from other traditions, new complexities and slippages of meaning are revealed. In turn, viewed alongside the album cover, contemporary and historic artworks might be more didactic than they first appear. The Chapman brothers' work *Token Pole* (figure 5.46) is accepted as a contemporary artwork within the space of the gallery, but were a similar image displayed on a metal album cover, one suspects that the reception would be less accommodating.

Chapter 6: An explanation and analysis of three paintings

Introduction

Following the detailed deconstructive analysis of a number of metal artworks in the previous chapter, as well as the discussion of painting methodologies in chapter 2, this chapter will explore the intentions and motivations behind three recent paintings that I have produced for this project. These paintings are *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell* (2016), *Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)* (2016–2017) and *Mediator* (2016–2017). All of these paintings are made in light of the contextualisations and connections between battle jacket practice and other customisation and symbolic traditions explored in chapter 4. The intention was to paint a series of fictional garments and objects that imaginatively explore and rearticulate these connections in speculative ways. These are not objects that can or should exist, but objects that are posited through the alternative space of painting to explore the cultural connections, juxtapositions and hierarchies previously discussed, to see what might be gained from these in terms of insights for the respective disciplines of metal subculture and painting discourses.

It is not my intention to interpret my own work in an *a posteriori* manner, as the process of assembling such an interpretative apparatus would be lengthy and is perhaps best left to the viewer or critic of my work. Instead, I seek here to explain my creative thought process in conceiving of, planning and producing these paintings, and to show how they address the aims and concerns of this research project.

How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell (2016)

This painting (see figure 6.1) is largely inspired by the customised leather motorcycle jackets worn by members of the rocker subculture (Stuart,

1987; Friedrichs, 2012). I am interested in the ways in which personal identity and allegiances are negotiated within the structures and accepted practices of a subculture, and how these are visually communicated through the form of the jacket.

In undertaking this painting I have been indebted to Horst Friedrichs' photographic survey of rockers' jackets in his book *Pride and Glory* (2012). Friedrichs' investigation not only chronicles the jackets as whole articles, but also features a wealth of close-ups and detail shots that reveal the diversity of customisation practices used by rockers including hand painting, sewing and embellishment with studs, badges and chains, and reveals some of the sub-groups within the rocker culture, such as café racers, vintage denim enthusiasts and fans of particular leather-making traditions, such as Lewis Leathers of London.

Part of my wider project has been to locate patterns of influence between different traditions of customised clothing, both contemporary and historic, and to locate battle jackets within such a network. Thus the customised motorcycle jacket features prominently, as official and 'outlaw' bike clubs developed after World War II. There are strong visual links with military patches, which denote allegiance and rank and locate an individual within wider organisational structures (see chapter 4). These in turn can be linked to the medieval heraldic tradition, which used emblems in a strict visual code to mark identity through bloodlines and to trace the histories of families through wars and marriages. In another vein, the jackets are also linked to less formal folk traditions such as mummers' plays and morris dancing, and the Pearly Kings and Queens of London. Contemporary groups that use personal jacket customisation to express loyalties and identities include not only metal fans and bikers but also European football fans, for example (see chapter 4).

Figure 6.1: Tom Cardwell, *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell,* 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

Figure 6.2: Tom Cardwell, preparatory sketch for *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm.

Figure 6.3: Tom Cardwell, first underpainting stage of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

Process

In starting the process of the painting, I first made a watercolour sketch (see figure 6.2) to help me work out my ideas. I then translated this on to canvas, making some minor changes to layout and the exact nature of the details along the way. The first stage of the oil painting (figure 6.3) was done with mid-tone underpainting in a warm burnt umber. The key idea was for the jacket to be autobiographical, but for a version of myself as I might otherwise have been. It is partly about the idea of projection, idealisation and nostalgic escapism, and also about the way that clothing and appearance can provide the individual with tools to alter or construct the self, to try to project the sort of person one wants to be, regardless of whether one feels it is currently 'true'. Growing up in rural England, I aspired to the exotic visions of American cool that I saw in media – films, music and literature. So this jacket represents a version of myself that might have been had I lived a different kind of life, in a different kind of

country. The motorcycle jacket itself embodies these ideas of freedom, adventure and the myths of the exotic 'West'. These are contrasted with another kind of nostalgic escapism – that provided by the romantic vision of an idyllic England of days long gone – pre-industrialised, bucolic, charmed – the quasi-mythical kingdom of Wessex that existed until the eleventh century.

The myth of the cowboy

A number of artists have made work that explores connections with other people who share their name (for example see Hays, n.d.) I found out about a Wyoming cattle rancher called Thomas Lee Cardwell, who tragically died in 2014 aged 33 – he was almost exactly three years younger than me. I was fascinated by his story, detailed on a family website, a Facebook page and local obituaries (figure 6.4). Despite our similar names, close ages and similar family situations, it seemed to me that this Tom Cardwell had lived a life very different from mine. His was the life of the cowboy – riding in rodeos and working on a ranch that had been in his family for three generations. He seemed to embody the very exotic Wild West ideal that had captivated me as a child. I decided to make this Tom Cardwell the central focus of the jacket, with the wild frontier landscape and the horse as symbols of freedom and the mythical primal struggle of humans in a hostile environment that seems embedded

Figure 6.4: *Obituary of Thomas Lee Cardwell*, webpage from trib.com

in the American national subconscious.

The central panel of the jacket in the painting (see figure 6.5) is based on the ace of spades symbol, a popular motif on rockers' jackets and in rock music (notably on the logo for Motorhead's anthem 'Ace of Spades'). The image within shows two cowboys on horseback against the backdrop of the mountains Wyoming is famous for. The whole is rendered in the polarised style of pre-industrial woodcut. As well as connecting the scene with the nostalgia of the natural and the handmade, this also echoes the bold and simplified designs (often only in black and white) common on motorcycle jackets and in metal artwork. The word 'Wyoming' caps the image, formed from lightning forks in the sky and also styled on the jagged letterforms beloved of metal bands. Around the image are the letters 'A' and 'D', representing variously 'anno domini', 'art and design' and the famous monogram of the great medieval German painter and woodcut artist Albrecht Dürer. Beside the central spade shape there are the images of a pistol (with obvious connections to the Wild West, danger, etc.) and a white horse (representing both the horses of the ranchers and the ancient chalk horses found in Wessex). In the panel to the right, a scroll lists places in Wyoming in a manner that emulates the practice by some Rockers of listing places visited on 'runs'. Thus the connection between location and identity is reinforced.

The connection between the land, a sense of place and personal identity is an important theme in Cormac McCarthy's 'Border Trilogy' (1992/2010, 1994/2010, 1998/2010). These novels chart the lives and adventures of two young cowboys, Billy Parham and John Grady Cole, as they seek to hang on to a frontier life in an America that is rapidly changing. Their love of wild plains and open country leads them to Mexico, where they find something of the romance and wildness that they feel once existed across the United States. In these novels the horse embodies this love for the wild country and cowboy lifestyle, and a sense of personal freedom. Thus I

chose to combine my cowboy figure with that of John Grady Cole, and there is a reference to Cole on the left sleeve of the jacket.

Figure 6.5: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

The third strand of the cowboy reference of the jacket comes in the form of the character 'Blondie', played by Clint Eastwood in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Sergio Leone, 1966) (see figure 6.6). The film forms the third of another trilogy, Leone's 'Dollars' trio, which also includes *A Fistful of Dollars* and *For a Few Dollars More*. Now regarded as one of the classics of the 'Spaghetti Western' genre, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* epitomises the mythical Wild West, with Eastwood's character embodying the hard-living, nomadic, taciturn cowboy hero, with rough manners but a

good heart. The symbolism for my jacket is appropriate, as it deals with the romantic mythology surrounding the imagery of the Wild West, from the perspective of someone English.

Metallica and the Western

During recent tours, the band Metallica have chosen to open their concerts with the climactic final scene from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, in which the three protagonists face one another at the cemetery where the gold they are seeking is apparently buried. On some occasions, the band have even played a cover version of Ennio Morricone's haunting score from the scene live over the movie clip. Since the 1990s, the band have returned several times to the theme of the Western and associated ideas of freedom and individuality. Their music has increasingly featured influences from Mexican mariachi and film scores such as Morricone's. Because of these connections to the theme of the cowboy, as well as my long-time fondness for Metallica's music (their eponymous 'Black Album' was one of the first metal records I owned), I have included several references to songs by Metallica on the jacket.

Metallica's 'Black Album' was the band's fifth studio album, released in 1991 (for a discussion of the cover artwork for this album see chapter 5). The album deals repeatedly with themes relating to the Western genre, and with ideas of freedom, the nomadic traveller and a patriotic appreciation for the country of America, that were not in such evidence on previous records. I chose to focus particularly on three tracks that deal lyrically and musically with these themes, particularly 'The Unforgiven', 'Wherever I May Roam' and 'Don't Tread on Me'.

With an obvious reference to the Western movie of the same name (Eastwood, 1992), the track ‘The Unforgiven’ tells the story of an individual’s struggle against a harsh world and an oppressive system of authority.

Figure 6.6: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

It also deals with more existential questions, beginning with the lines ‘New blood joins this earth / and quickly he’s subdued / through constant pain disgrace / the young boy learns their rules’ (Hammett, Hetfield and Ulrich, 1991). The track opens with a haunting guitar solo, with a distinct musical reference to Morricone’s Western scores discussed earlier. The life of the protagonist in this track is hard and unrelenting, as he struggles to exist in a cruel world. This narrative of hardship and struggle against the land echoes the themes of McCarthy’s ‘Border’ trilogy (1992–1998/2010) and John Steinbeck’s novels, particularly *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which centres around the tragic life of the protagonist Tom Joad (immortalised once more in a song by Bruce Springsteen (1995)).

'Wherever I May Roam' is a hymn to the life of a nomadic, rootless traveller, as they journey through the American landscape. The lyrics make this clear from the outset, beginning:

Figure 6.7: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

Figure 6.8: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

'And the earth becomes my bride / I am stripped of all but pride / so in her I do confide / gives me all I need' (Hetfield and Ulrich, 1991b). Later the narrator embraces the insults given to him by society: 'Rover, wanderer, nomad, vagabond / call me what you will' (Hetfield and Ulrich, 1991b). I have featured this line on the crest towards the bottom of the jacket (figure 6.7), which takes the form of an eagle (an enduring symbol of freedom), with a skull replacing the head (in part a reference to Pushead's many artworks for Metallica's album covers that invariably feature skulls). The right sleeve of the jacket features an embroidered patch with a gravestone bearing another lyric from the song: 'Carved upon my stone / "My body lies yet still I roam" ' (Hetfield and Ulrich, 1991b). This theme of the wandering outcast is prevalent amongst traditional folk songs, particularly in the blues tradition. Standards such as 'The Singer' narrate tales of travelling musicians who are not accepted anywhere.

The third track I have focused on for the jacket is 'Don't Tread on Me', about the War of Independence (figure 6.8). This is represented by the coiled snake patch that makes reference to the Gadsden Flag as discussed in chapter 5.

Wessex

As well as the Western references, the jacket features iconography relating to the old English kingdom of Wessex (figure 6.9). Whilst Wessex does still refer to a geographical area in the south and south-west of England, it has not been a separate entity for around 1,000 years. The image of Wessex as a quasi-mythical land is persistent, however, and is often invoked by those interested in the myths and history of the south-west (also known as the

Figure 6.9: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

West Country). This area includes most of the places where I grew up, so I personally feel a connection and sense of identity with Wessex in some ways. As a teenager I thought the rural places I lived in were boring and mundane, and I longed for the exotic – often embodied for me by American culture. As I got older, however, I began to understand more of the history of the places where I lived and developed a nostalgia of a different sort, for the mythical images conjured up by the folklore of these lands (such as that surrounding places like Stonehenge, Avebury and Glastonbury). To this end the jacket features a patch commemorating the ancient stone circles of Stonehenge and Avebury (the stones of these monoliths corresponding to the tombstone of the cowboy on the other sleeve), as well as a scroll listing places found in Wessex, some of which I had close connections to whilst growing up. The flag of Wessex features a wyvern, a mythical creature similar to a dragon. I therefore included a wyvern patch on one sleeve of the jacket, and another on one of the brasses which hang at the bottom of the back panel.

The other character referenced on the jacket is the fourteenth-century English revolutionary leader Wat Tyler (figures 6.10 and 6.11), who led the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Tyler opposed King Richard II, but was ultimately killed by the king's soldiers at Smithfield in London (*Wat Tyler and the Peasants' Revolt*, n.d.). There are suggestions that Tyler's original surname was 'Helier' (*Wat Tyler*, 2016), which is very similar to my mother's family name of Helyar. This nominal connection seemed to work for the theme of the jacket, and I chose Tyler as another figure who, whilst historic, has also taken on mythical standing. If the cowboy figure represents the lure of the exotic and the myths of the Old West, Tyler here stands for a nostalgic vision of 'Olde Englande', a William Blake-like pre-industrial idyll which gives the mundanity of my childhood connection with something ancient and exciting.

Summary

In creating this jacket (or painting of a jacket), I have tried to describe the life of another version of myself – a version that might have been, but perhaps could never be. As well as celebrating my namesake, the Wyoming cowboy Tom Cardwell, it also explores ways in which identity is described in relation to the landscape in popular culture. This is echoed in the decorative practices that enable motorcycle jackets and battle jackets to record the histories and identities (often linked to place) of the riders who wear them.

Figure 6.10: Tom Cardwell, detail of *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

Figure 6.11: Portrait of Wat Tyler, date unknown, painting, available at alchetron.com

'*Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)* (2016–2017)

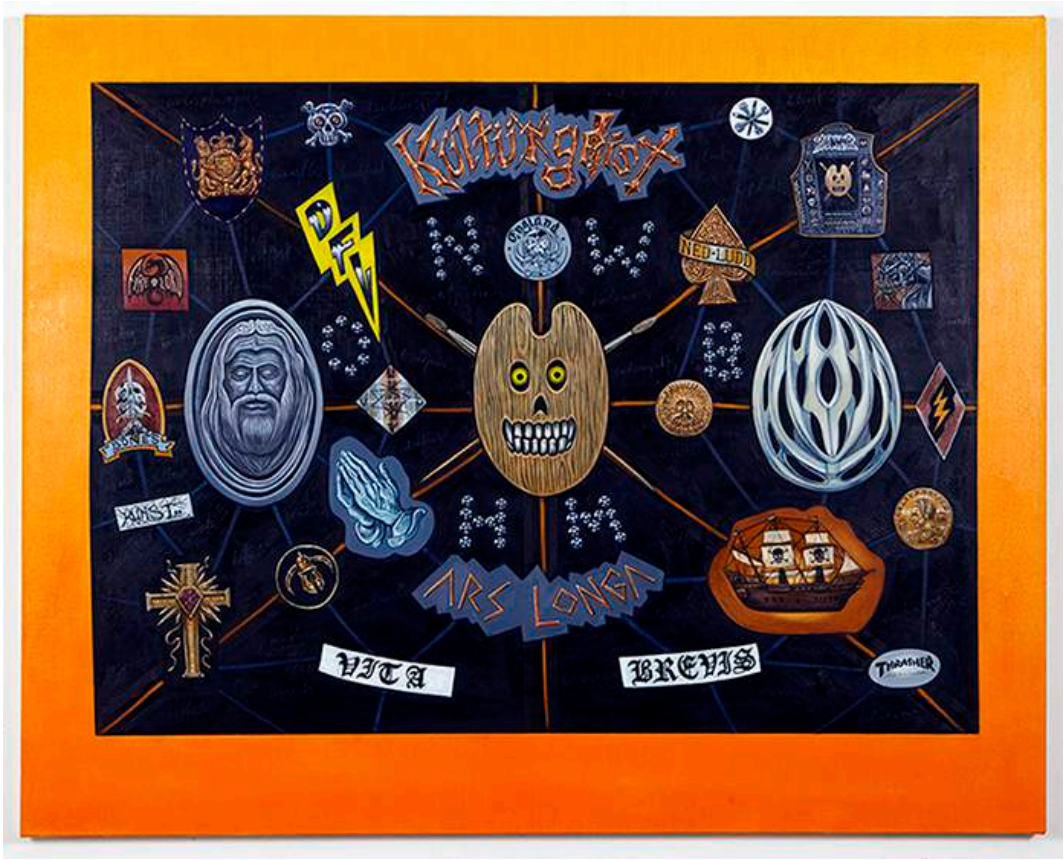

Figure 6.12: Tom Cardwell, *Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)*, 2017, painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 120 cm.

Figure 6.13: Tom Cardwell, sketch for *Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)*, 2016, painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm.

Introduction

The intention of this painting is to explore the historic connections between heavy metal, subcultural customisation, and national identity as expressed for example in the structures of flags, heraldry and military insignia. Here the personally selected arrangements of battle jackets are conflated with the more rigidly structured form of the standard. The concept was initially inspired by the handmade jolly roger flags of submariners, such as the *Jolly Roger for HMS Trenchant* (c.1943) (see figure 6.14) held by Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, which was included in the Tate Britain exhibition *British Folk Art* (Kenny, McMillan and Myrone, 2014).

Figure 6.14: *Jolly Roger for HMS Trenchant*, c.1943, appliqué fabric. Collection of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (FLA.27). Available at chdt.org.uk

The use of hand sewing together with the DIY construction evident in the 'Jolly Roger' has a resonance with the construction of battle jackets by metal fans. There is also a parallel with the nature of the symbols, notably the skull emblem (discussed in chapter 5) and the colours black, white and red (as discussed in chapter 4). The structure of the national flag is combined with a series of visual references to British heavy metal, painting history and popular culture.

Union Flag

The structure of the flag in the painting is based on the Union Flag of Great Britain. The exploration of this flag as a post-colonial symbol (such as in the work of Jonathan Parsons) has been discussed in chapter 5. The choice of this flag was in part to make association with the resurgence of heavy metal music in Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This movement became known as the 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' (NWOBHM) (Berelian, 2005, p. 251; Weinstein, 2000, p. 44) that is referenced in the title of the painting. The intersecting bars of the Union Flag (vertical, horizontal, diagonal) are used to connect the various images and symbols that populate the painting, in the manner of patches deployed on a jacket. The colours of the flag have been altered – the blue/grey hues of the field evoking the variegated shades of denim. In the course of making this painting, the symbolism of the flag also became inevitably connected for me with the uncertainty of Britain's relationship to the rest of the world following the EU Referendum vote. The idea of Britain as an isolated island began to emerge in the popular consciousness, and so this painting reflects those associations too, through the deployment of the most recognised British national symbol.

'Kulturgeist'

The term ‘kulturgeist’ (translated as ‘spirit of culture’) refers to a fictional band that I contrived in the course of making some earlier artworks (Cardwell, 2014, 2014–2016). Tim Lower describes the term ‘kulturgeist’ as ‘conceptualizing expressed permutations in culturally and socially shared awareness patterns, especially as these permutations both reflect and vary with shared time (the *zeitgeist*) and place (the *ortgeist*)’ (Lower, 2010). I chose this term both for these connotations and references to systems of culture, and also because it sounds like a plausible metal band name. There is precedent for referencing a fictional band in the artist Jamie Shovlin’s work featuring an invented German glam rock band called ‘Lustfaust’ (Shovlin, 2006). For me, the idea of the band ‘Kulturgeist’ (along with a second invented band called ‘Kunstkammer’) conflates ideas of metal culture and associated visual themes with histories of art and painting. Whilst these various traditions might often be polarised in terms of their placement within cultural structures, there are many overlaps in terms of the themes they invoke (such as the romantic interest in the gothic and sublime, for example). Indeed, heavy metal sleeve artwork has often made reference to art history, as the survey by the website heavymusicartwork.com demonstrates (heavymusicartwork, 2016).

The central motif of the painting is the ‘kulturgeist’ emblem – a palette with a skull face and crossed paintbrushes. This connects the ‘Jolly Roger’ emblem with the idea of the painter’s craft and associations of art history, in a somewhat light-hearted manner. It also relates to the theme of the *vanitas* discussed in chapter 5. Below this emblem is the legend ‘Ars Longa’, which comes from the Latin translation of the ancient Greek motto ‘Ars Longa, Vita Brevis’ (art endures but life is short), attributed to Hippocrates (*Ars longa, vita brevis*, 2016). This inscription often featured in traditional *vanitas* paintings.

On the left of the palette emblem is an image of a classical statue of a philosopher. This again connects with ideas of antiquity and classical culture (in a popular pastiche) but also with the bearded mystic or sage

(bearded artist or philosopher figures have featured prominently in the work of a number of contemporary British figurative painters such as Nigel Cooke and Ryan Mosley). This image is based on a drawing I made in 2013 of a Roman statue of Hercules (c.AD 69–78) in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York City (see figure 6.15). This image also links with the interest within heavy metal in mythology and warrior heroes, as well as with beards and long hair as symbols of wild masculinity (Weinstein, 2000, p. 65).

Figure 6.15: Roman statue of Hercules, c. AD 69–78, marble sculpture, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA. Photograph by Tom Cardwell.

On the right of the central palette emblem there is a cycle helmet seen from above. This echoes visually the image of the skull (indeed, the cycle helmet is a sort of exo-skull), and the three motifs on the horizontal axis of the painting (the bearded portrait bust, the palette and the helmet) all emphasise each other formally as they all use the oval shape. The link between the skull and the helmet is also reminiscent of Ricky Swallow's works (discussed in chapter 5) such as *iMan prototypes* (2001) and *Everything is Nothing* (2003) (figure 6.16).

Nautical imagery

A number of the symbols on the painting refer to nautical traditions. As well as the links to the 'Jolly Roger' discussed above, the obvious reference here is the sailing ship image (see figure 6.17).

Figure 6.16: Ricky Swallow, *Everything is Nothing,* 2003, sculpture, carved jelutong and milliput, © the artist and Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London. Available at pinterest.com

Figure 6.17: Tom Cardwell, detail of *Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)* (Work in progress), 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 120 cm.

Seafaring features prominently in British history, especially in the days of colony and empire, and imagery connected with the sea figures large in

the nation's art and psyche (for example in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner and the novels of Joseph Conrad). My current studio in south-east London lies very close to the historic naval base at Greenwich, and the trade docks at Wapping and Charlton. The Thames and its estuary which runs out through Kent were pivotal in Britain's sea power, and I wanted to connect these histories with a new kind of cultural export (or colonialism?) in the case of metal. The NWOBHM saw British bands make a significant impact on the global metal scene of the 1980s. American bands such as Metallica have often cited the influence of NWOBHM bands such as Mayhem, Venom and Diamond Head (Berelian, 2005, p. 251; Weinstein, 2000, p. 44). There is an even more explicit connection between metal and nautical references in the case of the subgenre known as 'pirate metal'. This is a light-hearted contemporary metal scene that combines heavy music styles with none-too-subtle references to a distinctly theatrical version of pirate folklore. Whilst the genre can be said to originate with the German band Running Wild in 1987 (Myers, 2009), it currently has a popular following with bands such as Scotland's Alestorm, and Swashbuckle from New Jersey. Other metal bands have on occasion used nautical subjects in lyrics and artwork, notably Iron Maiden and the musical arrangement of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Harris, 1984) and Mastodon's concept album *Leviathan* (Mastodon, 2004), which was based on Melville's *Moby-Dick* (Myers, 2009).

Christian iconography

Whilst heavy metal has long been associated with controversy, dark spirituality and the occult (Hjelm, 2015, pp. 498–501; Weinstein, 2000, pp. 258–263), it perhaps unsurprisingly has repeatedly referenced Christian subjects and iconography, even if in a negative sense (for example, the use of inverted crosses and pentagrams, or the focus on Christian subjects by occult-influenced bands such as Marduk's album *Romans 5:12* (2007) (see Naylor Davis, 2015)). Arguably, heavy metal culture has not just reacted against Christianity, but has been actively shaped by it.

The interest in all things spiritual, with a particular focus on heavenly battles, angels and demons, the apocalypse and Armageddon, is unusual in contemporary youth-oriented music subcultures. There are even subgenres such as ‘Christian death metal’ (also known as ‘white metal’) that continue to generate controversy on both sides of the spectrum amongst metal fans (Moburg, 2013). On a more immediately visual level, metal artwork continues to make extensive use of Christian imagery, whether through the iconography of the cross (or its inverted counterpart), the use of historic artworks with biblical themes mentioned above (heavymusicartwork.com, 2016) or the commonly favoured ‘blackletter’ variant typefaces which originate with medieval German protestant publications (Coggins, 2015). The somewhat parochial version of Christianity that for a time characterised British religious life may seem a far cry from these kinds of iterations, yet the two cultures seem to me more closely tied than some would like to admit. Thus it seemed fitting in tracing the connections of heavy metal with a particularly British sensibility to include some visual links to Christian culture.

Figure 6.18: German military patches, photograph. Available at liveauctioneers.com

Military insignia

The influence of military emblems and insignia (figure 6.18) on heavy metal has been discussed in chapter 4. I wanted to pick up on this in the *Kulturgeist II* painting, combining heavy metal band logos with military style patches. Once more, this extends the theme of a post-colonial perspective on British Empire, power and influence, and considers the ways in which metal music often appropriates the imagery of masculine power (perhaps unsurprising in view of its traditional white male blue collar fan base (Weinstein, 2007)).

Summary

The painting *Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM)* (2016) explores the important contribution of British culture to global heavy metal music. In drawing together a range of references to British history, colonial power, military strength, religious imagery and the history of painting, the complex webs of influence between ostensibly diverse sources begin to emerge. The use of the potent symbol of the Union Flag underlines the contemporary uncertainty about the role of Britain in today's world and recognises the importance of national identity for many aspects of metal music. The ways in which these values are communicated through the visual aspects of metal in the battle jacket (and its personal customisation) are connected to ancient customs of displaying allegiance through flags, coats of arms and uniforms.

Mediator (2016–2017)

Figure 6.19: Tom Cardwell, *Mediator*, painting, oil on canvas, 2017, 150 x 120 cm.

Introduction

This painting (figure 6.19) shows a chasuble, or priestly garment, decorated with a range of imagery relating to metal and art history. The central portrait is based on a painting by Spanish romantic painter Salvator Rosa, as well as on the famous self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer. There are also visual allusions to a Christ figure, a connection that might be made with the original self-portraits. Monstrous creatures from Rosa's paintings populate the lower left-hand side of the robe, whilst those on the right are from one of Dürer's etchings. The scenes are underpinned by a stout tree that spreads its branches across the garment, as a visual device signalling connections and heritage. The tree trunk features heraldic motifs including the skull palette of the 'Kulturgeist' band as well as a Norse helmet and crossed spanners suggesting bikers or blue collar work. The phrase 'Romance is Dead' is partially spelled out across the shoulders of the garment, although this could also be taken as a reference to psychedelic rockers The Grateful Dead, along with the rainbow background to the robe. The phrase at the bottom is from Rosa's painting and translates as 'Be silent, unless what you have to say is better than silence'.

Chasuble

A chasuble is a decorated robe (see figure 6.20) or over-garment worn by priests in the Roman Catholic, High Anglican, Lutheran and Methodist churches when celebrating the Eucharist (Holy Communion) (*Chasuble*, 2016). It is thought to have developed from types of functional daily clothing worn in the world of the early church, and to have eventually taken on a decorative ceremonial nature to keep it separate from other clothing that may have been work-stained (Knight, 2012). I chose the chasuble as the focus for this painting as it is part of the rich history of decorative, ornamented clothing with a powerful symbolic and ceremonial function. In these senses it forms part of a heritage and tradition of which battle jackets are a more recent example. The figure of the priest with their

symbolic role in acting as a mediator, channelling emotions and embodying a particular locus of beliefs, is in some ways similar to that of the metal musician. The latter also serves to reify the belief

Figure 6.20: Example of a chasuble, photograph. Available at https://www.wattsandco.com/

structures of their audience, and acts as a mediator between the audience and the intensity of the live concert experience (Weinstein, 2000, p. 59). For many metal fans, the musicians represent a position to which they aspire, at least in theory. Professional bands represent the deepest lifestyle commitment to metal, particularly if they are of the more extreme genres.

If the metal musician can be likened to the priest performing the Eucharist, the metaphor might be extended to the painter. The particularly romantic vision of the painter as a spiritual, almost shamanistic figure persists in Western cultural consciousness, even if in reality it has been somewhat debunked. In this image, the painter is in receipt of hidden knowledge, in touch with profound truths about humanity, an otherworldly genius whose skills might have been won in a Faustian bargain in exchange for the quiet happiness of ‘normal’ life. Thus the chasuble here is populated with the

image of the Spanish romantic painter Salvator Rosa, along with figures from his paintings and those of Albrecht Dürer.

The chasuble also has a personal symbolism for me in that my father was an Anglican vicar, and the particular ceremonies and vestments of his office have childhood associations for me. In this way the symbolic worlds of the church and heavy metal subculture are powerfully linked in my mind.

Salvator Rosa

Figure 6.21: Salvator Rosa, *Philosophy,* 1645, painting, oil on canvas, 116 x 94 cm. National Gallery, London. Available at www.nationalgallery.org.uk

The central figure in the painting *Mediator* is taken from Salvator Rosa's famous work *Philosophy* of 1645 (figure 6.21). This painting impressed me from my earliest visits to the National Gallery in London as a teenager. The detached, cool regard with which the subject considers the viewer gives the painting a mysterious air and seems to embody the popular

image of the romantic visionary artist. When I first saw this painting I was struck by the similarity it bears to photographs of metal musicians, even down to the sombre, clouded sky in the background, heightening the brooding menace of the work. The possible connections to metal imagery go further, in that Rosa is well known for painting monstrous and occult subjects, such as *Witches at their Incantations* (1646), also in the National Gallery.

The phrase from the sign at the base of Rosa's *Philosophy* reads 'Aut tace / Aut loquere meliora silentio' ('Be silent, unless what you have to say is better than silence'). This phrase features in my own painting, across the bottom of the chasuble.

Christ / Albrecht Dürer

Figure 6.22: Albrecht Dürer, *Self-portrait,* 1500, painting, oil on canvas, 66 x 49 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Available at en.wikipedia.org

The painter figure in *Mediator* also refers to Albrecht Dürer's self-portrait of 1500 in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (figure 6.22). As well as prefiguring the modern-day photographic portraits of metal musicians (see figure 6.24) (particular resemblance is struck here by the flowing hair and beard, the unwavering stare and dark background), this portrait also refers visually to popular portraits of Christ (Bailey, 1995), such as Hans Memling's fifteenth-century *Christ Giving His Blessing* (figure 6.23). This resemblance provides another link to the idea of the musician or painter as priest; indeed for Christians Christ is the ultimate priest or mediator between humanity and God (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 4:15). Thus the Christ image underpins the symbolism of my painting, and connects the diverse references to traditions of metal subculture, romanticism in painting, church tradition and the priestly figure of the painter as mediator.

Figure 6.23 (left): Hans Memling, *Christ Giving His Blessing,* 1478, oil on panel, 38 x 28 cm. Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena. Available at www.wga.hu

Figure 6.24 (right): Nick Holmes of the heavy metal band Paradise Lost, photograph. Available at metal-rules.com

Tree

The tree image provides structure to the decoration of the chasuble in my painting, and serves to visually connect the diverse elements. The tree is itself symbolic, referring to the histories and hierarchies recorded in family trees and heraldic charts. Traditional chasuble designs often feature a similar structure in the form of a cross or Y-shape (see figure 6.20) (*Chasuble*, 2016). The tree is a common heraldic motif, with various symbolism depending on the variety and style of depiction. The tree is also a rich metaphor in the Bible, with diverse uses such as for the people of God as 'oaks of righteousness' (Isaiah 61:3), for the idea of Christians being rooted in Christ (John 15:5), as a prefiguring of Christ as a tree of shelter and protection (Ezekiel 17:23, 31:6), and as a place of curse like a gallows (2 Samuel 18:10, Galatians, 3:13). The tree is closely linked to the image of the cross that is central to Christianity. The medieval idea of the 'tree of life' uses the tree form as a metaphor to connect the events of Christ's life with the eternal communion of believers and was used as an aid to devotion (Hollis, 2006) (see figure 6.25). In my painting the tree acts both as symbol and as a reference to ideas of connections and histories being traced by the branches.

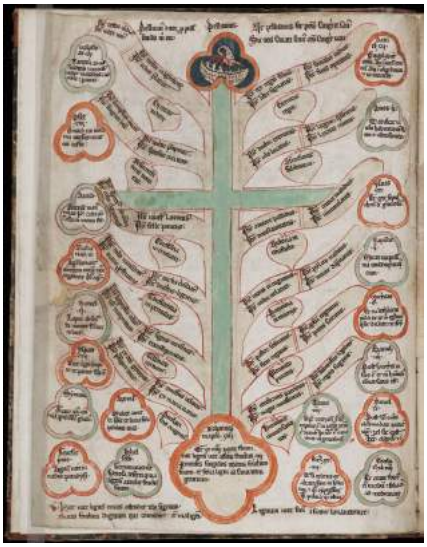

Figure 6.25: 'Tree of Life' diagram from manuscript *Beinecke MS 416,* illustrated book, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Available at brbl-archive.library.yale.edu

Other characters

On the right of the chasuble in my painting are a number of monstrous creatures based on those in Salvator Rosa's paintings, such as *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1645) and *Witches at their Incantations* (1646). Facing these creatures on the left side of the painting are a bearded figure, an angel, an owl and praying hands, all taken from Albrecht Dürer's paintings and woodcuts. These characters serve both to extend the references to the two painters discussed above, and to represent the idea of heavenly battles between forces of good and evil, a common theme in Christian narrative as well as in metal lyrics and artwork.

The central trunk of the tree is decorated with heraldic motifs including the crossed spanners of biker culture and the palette skull logo of the invented band 'Kulturgeist'. Around the band encircling the bearded portrait at the top are emblems associated with the *vanitas* tradition in painting. The large lettering on either side of the portrait (partially occluded) spells out 'Romance is dead' – leaving a question mark over the veracity or legacy of the romantic movement in culture. The role of the spiritual in the materialistic world of late capitalism is often called into question although, if anything, religious belief worldwide appears to be on the rise once more (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2010).

Summary

The painting *Mediator* (2016) combines a number of references to painting history, Christian iconography, romanticism and medieval heraldry, linking all of these to the historic references found in heavy metal artwork. The romantic image of the artist-genius is conflated with the moody portraits of metal musicians common to the genre, which in turn reference the image of Christ popular in medieval and Renaissance portraiture. The importance of long hair and beards in metal music (Weinstein, 2000, p. 65) echoes the way these devices feature in the portraits discussed above. The figure in

the painting combines the roles of priest, painter, musician, mystic and Christ figure, showing how these various cultural constructs inform and influence one another. The use of the tree image as the background to the garment extends the reference to biblical iconography, as well as to heraldic trees of lineage.

As a richly decorative and symbolic garment, the chasuble has a direct link with the customised style and functions of the battle jacket, even if they come from very different cultural traditions. As has been argued, the spheres of heavy metal and Christian tradition may overlap far more than is often assumed.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to explain in detail the ideas and processes behind the design of three of the paintings I have made for the conclusion of this project. Whilst earlier chapters have dealt with an analysis of battle jackets in their own right, and discussed their position relative to other cultural traditions, here I am exploring the legacy of these findings for my own practice and seeking to implement resultant strategies within the process of making my paintings. The paintings presented here focus on a number of objects that are distinct from battle jackets yet are closely connected in function and historic tradition. All use symbolism and decoration to communicate meaning within tightly established parameters, and all serve a practical and/or ceremonial function within the communities that make and use them. The leather motorcycle jacket has a practical function as protection for the rider, but is heavily embellished in the fashion of the rocker subculture. This decoration serves to describe individual identity within motorcycle subculture, with links to geographic places as well as clubs and networks. These jackets usually feature a combination of DIY customisation made by the rider, and commercially produced patches and badges. The flag is based on a long tradition of heraldic representation through which family, regal and national identities

are traced symbolically. In the case of military or naval flags (such as the submariners' 'Jolly Roger' in figure 6.14) there is an element of DIY construction as the flags were often produced and modified by the crew on board the vessel itself. In addition to main insignia, extra details are added to show 'kills' or missions accomplished. The flag here serves both to identify a vessel and to chart the history of the ship and its crew through the experiences of combat. The chasuble, although originally derived from a practical function, is now largely ceremonial and symbolic. It serves to mark the priest out as a mediator, one who can lead the congregation in the Eucharist ceremony. It is decorated with highly significant emblems such as the cross, and the colours used for fabric and decoration are also representative of events in the Christian calendar.

Through the paintings I have combined these objects with references to other traditions including heavy metal subculture, painting and art history, British history and identity, a nostalgic view of the American West and aspects of my own identity, life and experience. The point of these paintings is precisely to present objects that do not exist in reality. In one sense they are fictional objects, but perhaps it is more accurate to say they are proposals for objects that might exist. The space of painting is one in which the world can be explored from alternative perspectives, as well as merely mimicked (Albus, 2000; Grootenboer, 2005). The centrality of painting to the methodology of this project is precisely due to its ability to reposition aspects of reality in new configurations and juxtapositions. The painting space allows a suspension of the differentiation of fact and fiction, of what is 'real' and what is not. It does not therefore make sense to ask whether these objects are real or fake, true or false. We might ask rather whether the connections they propose are useful and enlightening, or not. In this sense these paintings stand in a long tradition of depicting the imagined, the not quite or the not yet.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I enjoy wearing it. Because it's a battle vest right? So it's supposed to be about honour and strength and power and passion and creativity, which are all things that I care about (Emily, 2015, p. 7).

Denim and Leather
Brought us all together
It was you that set the spirit free (Saxon, *Denim and Leather*, 1981).

In this study battle jackets have been explored as significant symbolic objects with important roles for those who wear them in a subcultural context, and connections to wider historic and contemporary cultural traditions. From the starting point of my own experiences as a metal fan and jacket maker I have sought to establish a rationale for painting practice as a tool to transcribe, analyse and re-contextualise battle jackets, offering unique perspectives through creative work. Using readings of still life painting as a genre to examine and rethink culture (Bryson, 1990; Grootenboer, 2005; Baudrillard, 1988), a context has been established for painting practice as a methodology for the project. Through conducting a series of interviews with metal fans, a range of views have been accessed relating to the meanings and importance of battle jackets for those who create and use them. These range from 'lifestyle' fans for whom the jacket is a part of their regular wardrobe and an important expression of personal subcultural identity, to those for whom the practice is reserved for occasional attendance at concerts and festivals. The responses gained through these conversations have enabled a discussion of the battle jacket from a subcultural perspective, with reference to relevant literature from the field of subcultural studies (Hebdige, 1979; Thornton, 1995; Muggleton, 2000; Weinstein, 2000, 2007; Williams, 2011).

Another perspective has been gained from applying some of the tools of art criticism and image analysis, particularly those expounded by Saxl

(1970) and Panofsky (1955/1983), and the intertextual approach of Barthes (1977), Kristeva (1980), Steiner (1985) and others. Thus the jackets can be better understood as objects and image collections located within complex and continually shifting webs of visual meaning, with links to many other areas of culture. Following the example of Calvino (1977), a range of readings of a particular battle jacket have been offered, using connections to other examples from metal subculture as well as related images from painting history. These complex connections have been explored in a creative way through the series of paintings discussed in the previous chapter.

An important idea running through much of this study is that of networks of images, signs and their meanings. In several ways it is suggested that battle jackets are best understood within complex systems of relationships of image traditions, of subcultural meanings and of art historical discourses. Through the production of a series of paintings and collages, these metaphors are realised in material and visual senses.

Central to much of my exploration of the importance of battle jackets in a subcultural context is the expression and delineation of a sense of personal and collective identity. Repeatedly in the interviews I conducted, metal fans returned to the importance of the battle jacket as a personal garment, something closely connected with ideas of self (see figure 7.3). As one fan put it, ‘It’s expressive. It is who you are’ (Eleanor, 2014, p. 4). Within the collective structures of subcultural identity experienced by fans (Baka, 2015), a more individual sense of self (Muggleton, 2000) can be projected through the customisation of the battle jacket.

This search for identity brings me back to my original motivation for this project. I chose to explore battle jackets in part due to the importance of

Figure 7.1: Tom Cardwell, *AC/DC,* 2015, painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm.

Figure 7.2: Tom Cardwell, *How the West (Country) Was Won / Jacket for Another Tom Cardwell*, 2016, painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm.

metal subculture in my own formative years, and in my development as an artist. As a teenager, my appropriation of heavy metal style was part of an attempt to assert my sense of self using the apparatus of the subculture. The battle jacket promised to confer something of the exotic coolness of an exciting vision of young adulthood that seemed somewhat beyond me at the time. Returning to these ideas and images as a painter has allowed me not only to investigate the wider importance of battle jackets in culture, but also to reflect on my own identity and the ways it might be articulated and constructed.

Figure 7.3: Battle jacket used to display a sense of personal identity, 13.08.2013, Bloodstock Festival, Derbyshire, UK. Photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Paintings and final exhibition

In conjunction with this thesis, two distinct series of paintings have been used to explore battle jackets in relation to the themes and ideas discussed here. The first series uses watercolour paint on paper to render detailed transcriptions of existing jackets (see figure 7.1). In studying particular examples of a range of jackets, details of types and arrangements of patches as well as design/composition, colour schemes and overall effects can be observed. These observations have contributed significantly to the discussion of the visual impact of the jackets in chapters 4 and 5. In terms of the final exhibition, they will serve to provide examples of different types of jackets as presented through painting and to contextualise the study.

The second series of paintings (see figure 7.2), as discussed in chapter 6, offers a creative response to the jackets, exploring connections with wider cultural and historic making traditions and practices of display through decorative clothing. In reconnecting these apparently disparate examples from a variety of spheres, new perspectives on each are gained. It is the methodology of painting that facilitates these creative juxtapositions, allowing tentative, playful and speculative arrangements to be explored. Thus the written aspect of this thesis must necessarily be taken in context with the presentation of artworks that forms a significant part of the study.

The final exhibition of works will take place from 23 March to 3 April 2017 at the Wimbledon Space Gallery, Wimbledon College of Art, London. The exhibition will be open to the public for the duration.

Image list

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: E. Repka (1987) *Peace Sells … But Who's Buying?* [Screenprint based on original single artwork for Megadeth] Available at: http://goo.gl/3v3DaE (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 1.2: J. Denby (1986) Artwork for New Model Army's *The Ghost of Cain* [Photograph of custom painted leather jacket] Available at: http://www.newmodelarmy.org/index.php/the-music/discography/studio-albums/291-the-ghost-of-cain-1986 (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 1.3: T. Cardwell (2013) Aiden's battle jacket [Photograph] In possession of: The author: London.

Figure 1.4: T. Cardwell (2013) *Manowar* [Painting, watercolour on paper, 38 × 26 cm] In possession of: The author: London.

Figure 1.5: W. Kalf (1662) *Still Life with a Chinese Bowl, a Nautilus Cup and other Objects* [Painting, oil on canvas, 79 × 67 cm] Available at: http://www.wga.hu/html_m/k/kalf/nautilus.html (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 1.6: T. Cardwell (2013–2014) *Kunstkammer* [Painting, oil on canvas 150 × 90 cm] In possession of: The author: London.

Figure 1.7: T. Cardwell (2014) *Kulturgeist* [Garment, custom embroidery and acrylic paint on denim jacket] In possession of: The author: London.

Figure 1.8: J. Cardwell (2014) A metal fan with customised jacket at Bloodstock festival, Derbyshire UK, 09.08.2014 [Photograph] In possession of: Jon Cardwell: London.

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: G. Quinn (2005) *Cake in the Wilderness* [Painting, oil on linen 36 × 46 cm] Available at:

https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/ged_quinn_cake_wilderness.htm (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 2.2: T. Cardwell (2012) *The Black Prince* [Painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 100 cm] Private collection: London.

Figure 2.3: T. Cardwell (2011) *With Hope in My Heart* [Painting, oil on canvas, 120 × 90 cm] In possession of: The author: London.

Figure 2.4: W. Kalf (1662) *Still Life with a Chinese Bowl, a Nautilus Cup and other Objects* [Painting, oil on canvas, 79 × 67 cm] Available at: http://www.wga.hu/html_m/k/kalf/nautilus.html (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 2.5: C. Gijsbrects (1670) *Trompe l'Oeil with Trumpet, Celestial Globe and Proclamation by Frederik III* [Painting, oil on canvas, 132 × 201 cm] Available at: http://www.smk.dk/en/visit-the-museum/exhibitions/european-art-1300-1800/rooms-in-european-art/room-206/ (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 2.6: C. Gijsbrects (1668) *Trompe l'Oeil with Studio Wall and Vanitas Still Life* [Painting, oil on canvas, 152 × 118 cm] Available at: http://www.smk.dk/en/explore-the-art/highlights/cornelius-norbertus-gijsbrechts-trompe-loeil-with-studio-wall-and-vanitas-still-life/ (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

Figure 2.7: S. Van Hoogstraten (c.1670) *Feigned Letter Rack Painting* [Painting, oil on canvas, 63 × 79 cm] Available at: http://www.wga.hu/cgi-bin/search.cgi?author=Van+Hoogstraten&title=Letter+board&comment=&time=any&school=any&form=any&type=any&location=&format=5 (Accessed: 19 July 2017).

Figure 2.8: B. Violette (2008) *Not Yet Titled (dwg09_02)* [Drawing, graphite on paper, 42 × 35 inches] Available at: http://arttattler.com/archivebanksviolette.html (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

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http://www.artnet.com/artists/banks-violette/motorhead-inverted-p5Aj1ZqOAHKwBysSi55nOw2 (Accessed: 25 July 2016).

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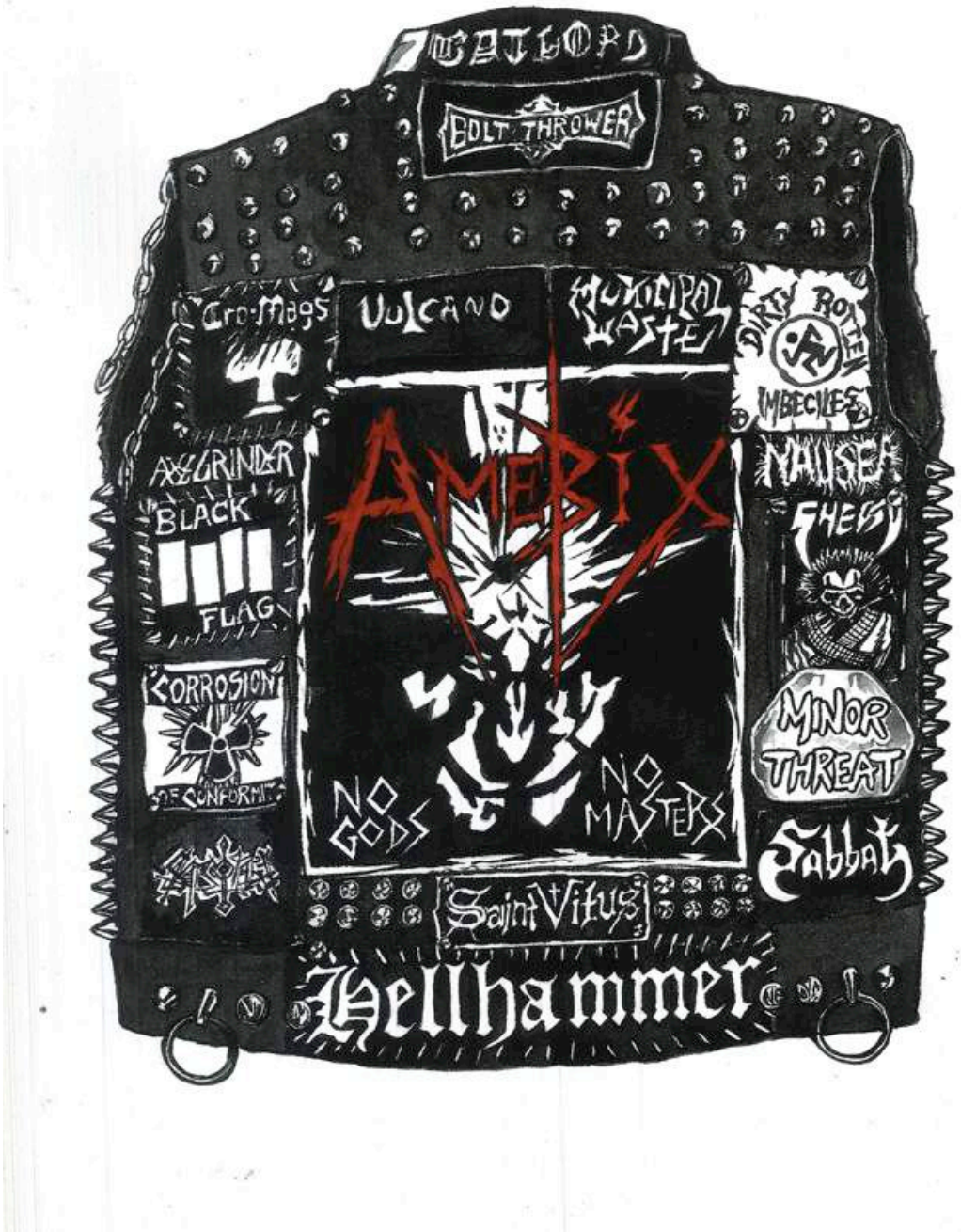
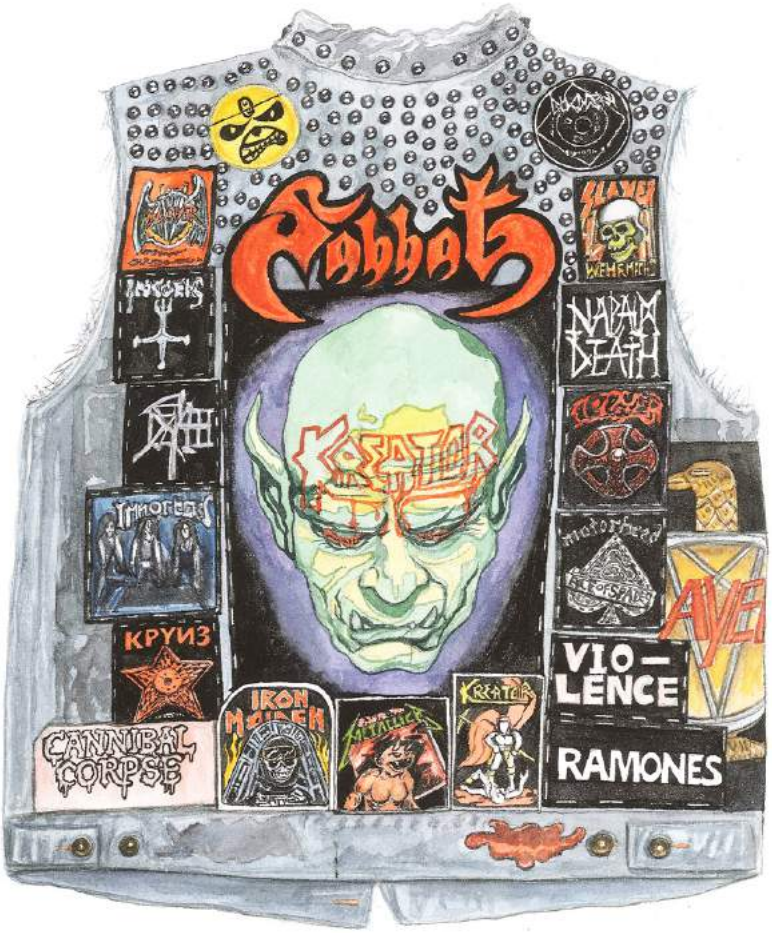
Appendix 1: Watercolour paintings of battle jackets



Amebix, 2012, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

Manowar, 2012, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

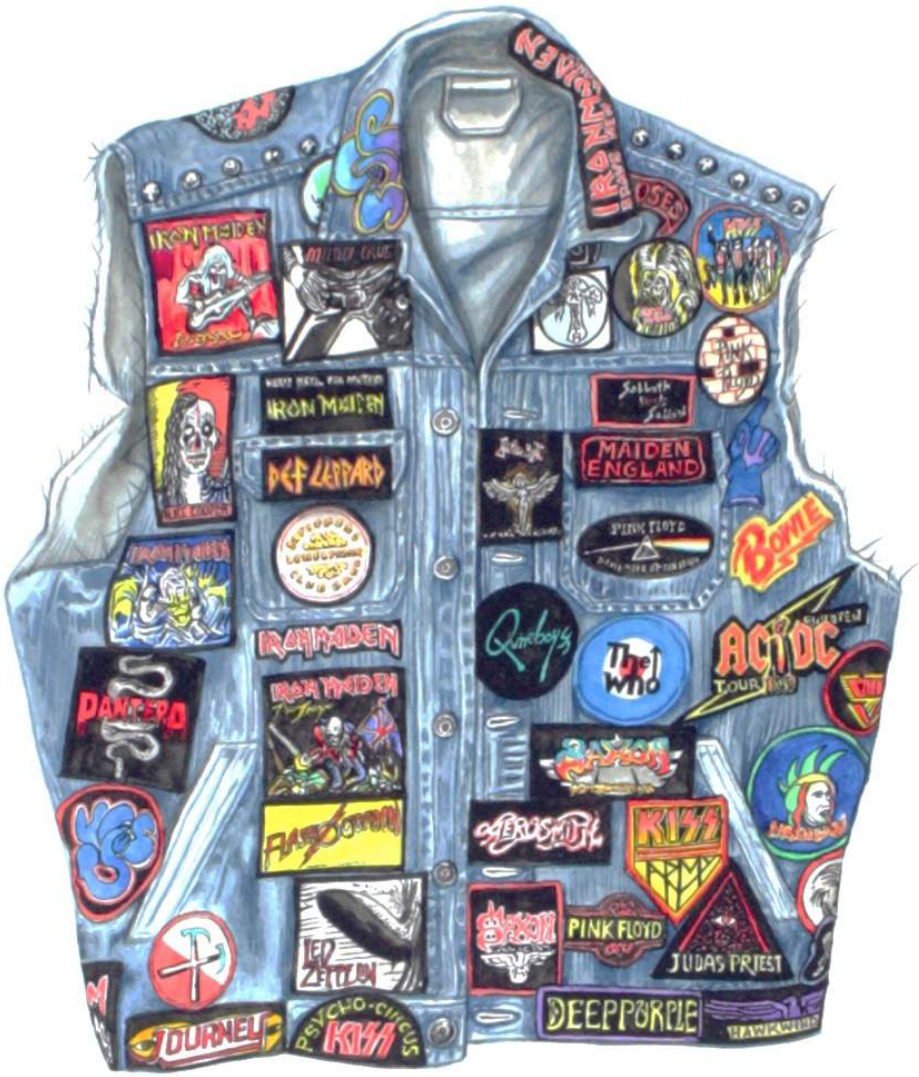


Sabbat, 2012, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

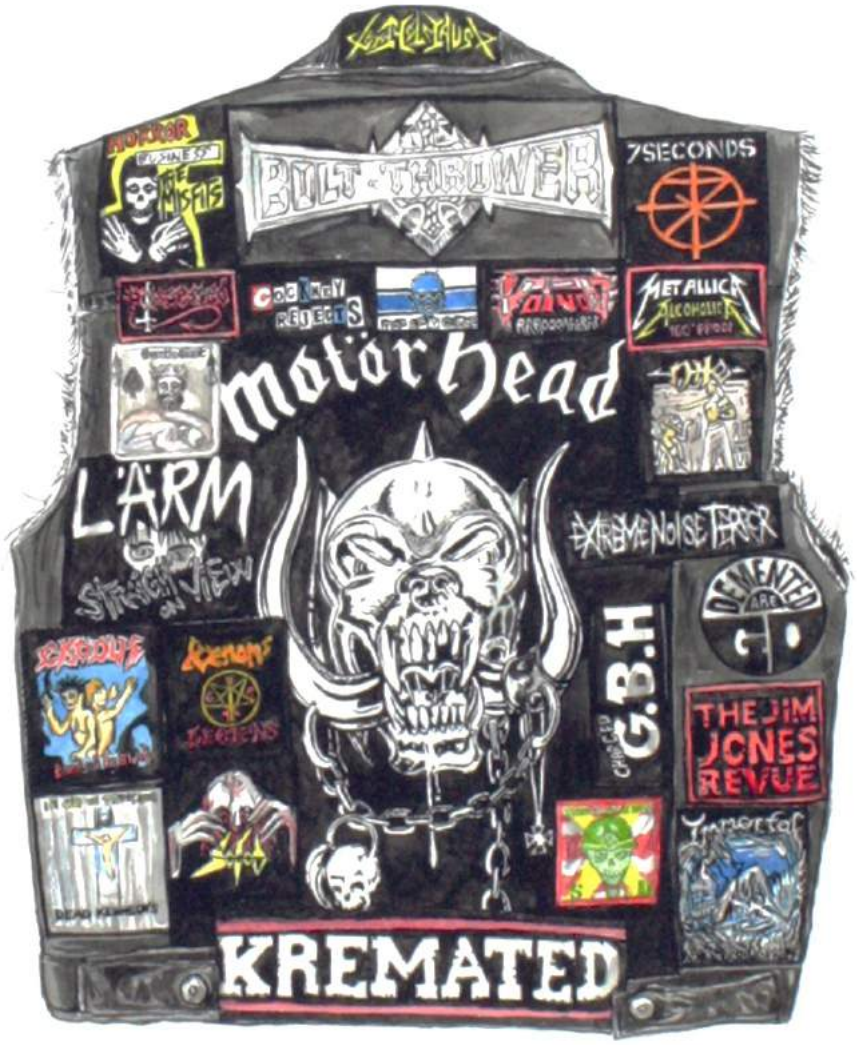
Iron Maiden, 2013, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

Death (inverted), 2013, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

AC/DC, 2014, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26, cm.



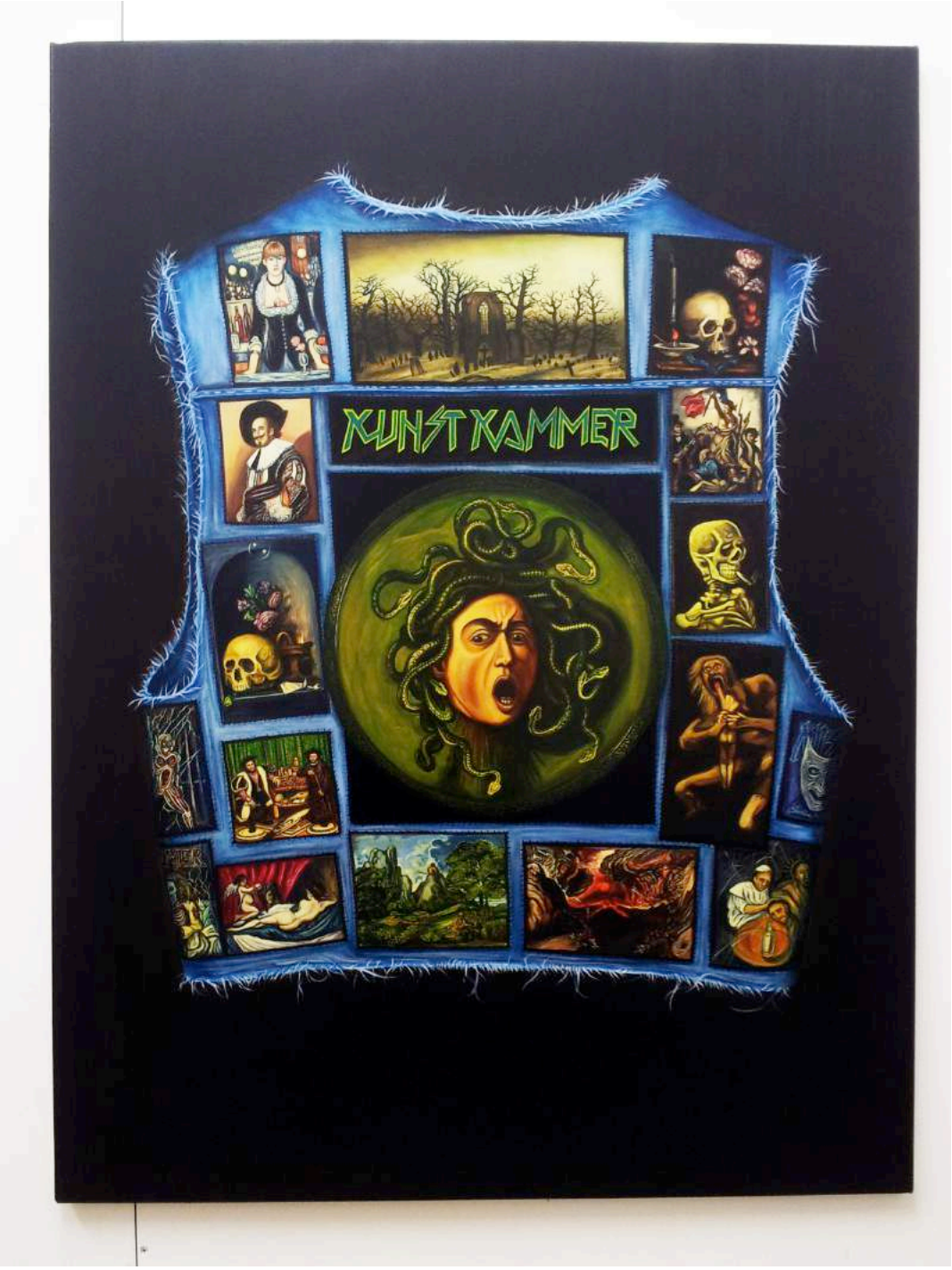
Aidan's Jacket (front), 2014, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.



Pete's Jacket (Motorhead,) 2014, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

Judas Priest, 2015, watercolour on paper, 38 x 26 cm.

Appendix 2: Large paintings



Kunstkammer, 2013, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm.

Trowbridge, 2013, oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm.

Heritage, 2014-16, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm.

How the West (Country) Was Won, 2016, oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm.

Kulturgeist II (Flag of the Republic of NWOBHM), 2017, oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm.

Mediator, 2017, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm.

Appendix 3: Painting produced following Viva Voce

Caravaggio patch, 2017, oil on canvas, 30 x 22 cm.

Appendix 4: Photographs of metal fans interviewed

Paul at Sonisphere Festival, July 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Tony at Sonisphere Festival, July 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.

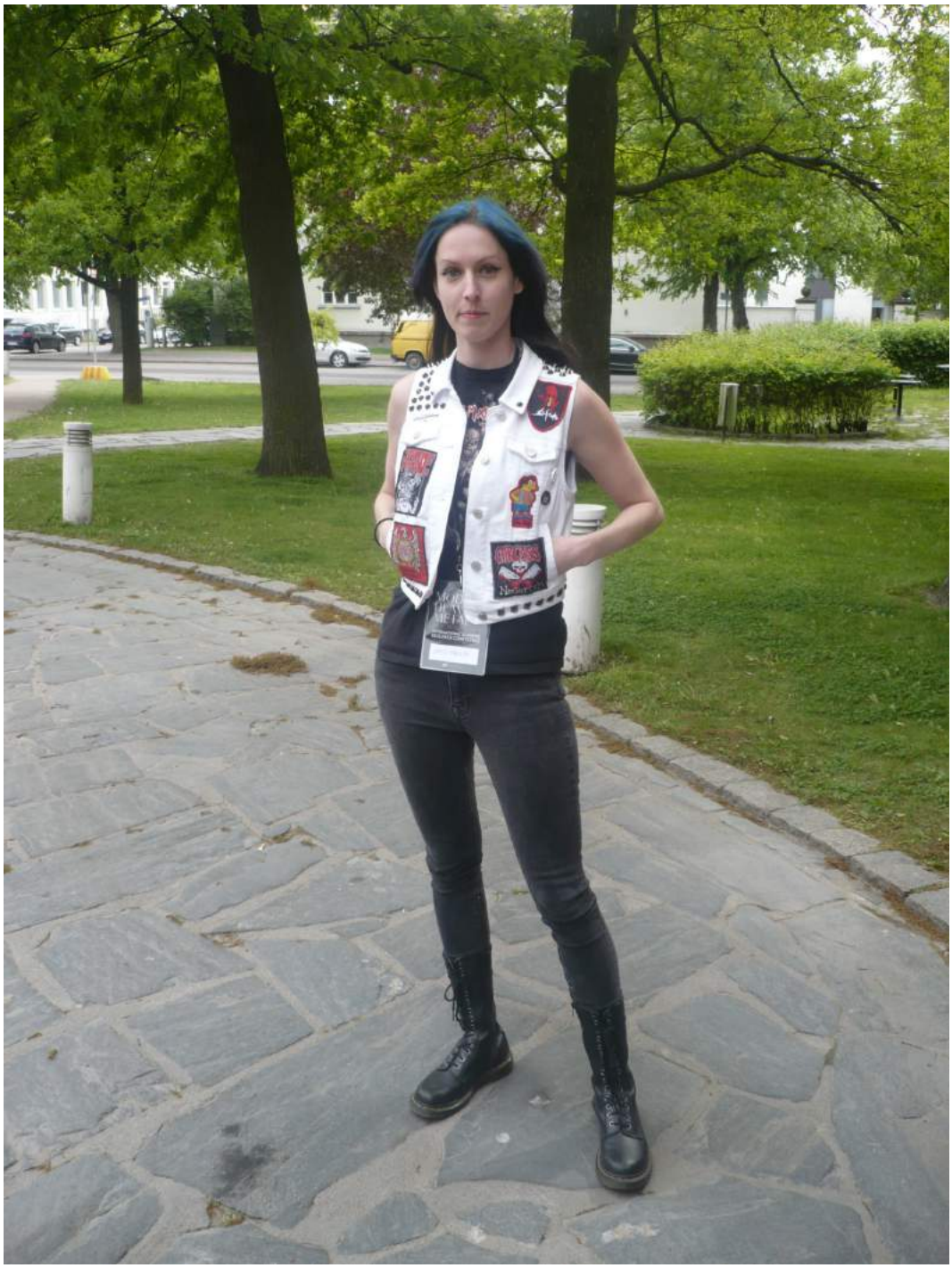
Dave at Sonisphere Festival, July 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Alex at Sonisphere Festival, July 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Eleanor and Jemima at Sonisphere Festival, July 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.

Chris at Bloodstock Festival, August 2014.

Pete at Bloodstock Festival, August 2014, photograph by Jon Cardwell.



Emily at Modern Heavy Metal Conference, Helsinki, June 2015.

Nick and Jenna at Modern Heavy Metal Conference, Helsinki, June 2015.

Appendix 4: Interview transcripts

Interviews – Sonisphere Festival 04-06 July 2014

Paul

Friday 4th July 2014 17.36

Tom Cardwell: Hi Paul, this is a PhD project based at University of the Arts London, I'll tell you a bit more about the project later on, but really I'm interested in why people make the jackets, you know, what goes into it, what it means to you, all that kind of stuff.
So you were just talking about how you made it…

Paul: Sure

T: Do you want to just tell me about the story of that?

P: Basically I've always wanted to have one, and I guess a lot of my peers – I play in a band –

T: OK

P: A lot of my peers, well I know that they have jackets too, the other guitarist in my band, he also has a battle vest, um, that's kind of how it works out really, it's um…I never used to have one when I was young and sprightly back in the day, with long hair and all that stuff, I never had one back then. I guess, um, I thought it was too cliché I guess, back then, I was trying to be a bit different…

T: Yeah

P: …even though I was a metal head I was trying to be something else. Basically, I guess when you get older you don't give a shit anymore, so, I

wanted a battle vest, that was it. So, I went out, I got the vest - I tried to find a cheap version – that was great, cut the arms off – didn't look right. This one *does*, I was going to stick it in bleach and stuff but I thought 'nah, that'd ruin it'…

T: Yeah

P:..a bit fake really. I wanted to make it look as though it was something that'd been, you know, as if I'd been on a motorcycle with it, for years, but I haven't, I don't even own a bike, but that's not the point. But the reason I have it…(breaks off)…Oh shit, there's me cousins, sorry no, I'm doing an interview right now fella, I'll be over in a moment, …(resumes)…Anyway, sorry about that.

T: That's all right

P: I guess I wanted something…it was a bit of a - competition is not the kind of word I'm trying to think of – but, my mates had been doing vests, it all goes back to my birthday. I had a big birthday party last year, oh sorry, earlier this year –

T: OK

P: And, one of my mates…basically they're not musicians…they got together, they done something that was kind of…they called themselves 'Motley Poo' –

T: Right

P: They were, basically they were doing a cover version of Motley Crue *Girls Girls Girls* but they changed the lyrics all to do with me, which I thought was quite flattering, I thought that was amazing.

T: Yeah

P: But they all came out with the proper regalia, you know with the big old battle vests and something. I said, 'Mate, we should wear these all the time', and since that point we've all been into the battle vests. I mean we're only talking about like, eight months ago.

T: Right

P: Um, so it's a new thing, it's not like a…I would love…to the fact that if I had this thirty years ago it'd be great, but, it wouldn't fit me, would it but that's er…

T: But you've been into metal that long, or did you kind of come back into it and that or…?

P: Oh no, I've always been into metal but I think there was a point…I think it was the case actually with a lot of people who were into metal then…I would say if you were just into heavy metal as opposed to being into black metal or the more extreme levels of metal…

T: Yeah

P: …I was more into the heavy metal, the thrash maybe, you know. But I liked a lot of stuff, back in those days. But I dressed a lot differently, I…my hair was long and I used to dye it as black as you like, and I used to wear leather trousers. I looked like somebody from a death metal, sorry, a black metal band. But I wasn't really into black metal, but I liked the aesthetic. But I was in a band, I was in a death metal band at the time –

T: Yeah

P: - but, it was kind of what we used to do. Um, nowadays I'm kind of, much more easy going with the whole metal thing, well I have to be I mean, I don't think they'd accept it in the office if I just came in…
But um, as far as…no, I never really went away from it but there was a point where I think it kind of – for me anyway – I just kind of went off a bit a little bit, so maybe I did, maybe I did, but…

T: Yeah, you just kind of…

P: I've always liked those, I've *always* liked Metallica's *old* stuff. I mean, their new stuff's ok, but it's all about [points at patch on] up to that album in my opinion, that's, you know, *And Justice for All.*

T: Yeah yeah yeah

P: That's the one that really gets it for me.

T: And I guess a lot of the bands that you've got on there…

P: Oh yeah, you know, this is pretty much, I mean, I am getting on a bit these days so I suppose the bands that are on here, they're not *current* bands, but I've never been into pop music so it doesn't really matter.

T: Yeah, but a lot of them are still going aren't they?

P: Oh, absolutely yeah, I mean…

T: Is Danzig still going?

P: Danzig's still going, yeah, he is. He's not as good as he used to be, as is always the case but, you know, he's getting on a bit, sure. Uh…

T: And was that how you chose…how did you decide who you were going to put on the jacket?

P: Just the bands I like, basically.

T: Whoever you listen to?

P: I love Pantera, I love Metallica, I like Danzig, um, White Zombie – not particularly too much the later albums, but the early st…like *La Sexorcisto* and *Astro-Creep* and albums like that, they're the ones I really like. Uh…Metallica, probably one of the first bands I ever saw. I sneaked into the concert and that when I was 15 – 'cause I was tall I could get away with it…

T: Was that at Milton Keynes?

P: Oh, no, it was way before that, it was London, and uh, Danzig was supporting…

T: Ah, OK

P: I was particularly lucky to get into that gig.

T: Yeah, that sounds good.

P: It was awesome man, that was round the time I guess. And that's it really.

T: And what about in terms of how you kind of decided where to put everything, was that a kind of spontaneous decision or did you think it through a lot?

P: I did think a bit, think it a bit through, to be honest. Yeah, I guess, 'cause I studied art and stuff I understand where things should go. I wouldn't say this worked out *exactly* how it should be, because some of the badges I was waiting to come through they weren't exactly the same size, but I, I kind of had an idea that they might be…

T: So you ordered most of them online?

P: Yeah, I just done it, I just blitzed it.

T: Ok, yeah. Just got it all ordered and…

P: There's loads of bands I really love who aren't on here.

T: Right, OK.

P: In fact, some of the bands on here aren't the ones I love so much as the ones I *could* put on here, but I just couldn't find the badges.

T: Right, so will you keep adding to it if you can find some?

P: Oh yeah, it's an on-going project, that's the way it's gonna go.

T: Yeah.

P: I'll keep going until 50 or 60 with this, it's OK. I'll probably make a few other jackets, I dunno. 'Cause I really enjoyed it, it was fun.

T: Yeah, like the actual making of it, you enjoyed that?

P: Yeah, oh definitely. It's um, Yeah, it was brilliant. And me girlfriend got…I don't know, she was *OK* with it…

T: Yeah…

P: My mate, his girlfriend, who's a bit more of a metaller, she actually *sewed* the badges on. Sewing badges on isn't really very heavy metal is it?

T: But a lot of guys do it don't they?

P: Yeah, but you have to, you have to! Back in the day when it was all the crossover like thrash, punk, the crossover music, they used to use a lot of…they used to use fishing wire

T: That's right, so it shows up.

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, I tried to get hold of some but I thought 'No, I'm not that fake-arse', you know, I'm not that *old* either. No, I'm not going to go for that!

T: Yeah.

P: Black cotton is perfectly ok. Although there's some red going on here too!

T: To match. That's been carefully done, hasn't it?

P: But I had to go for the Punisher skull because, er, I don't know much about Punisher but, I like the film, that's quite good, and I know it comes

from the comic book, and that's great, but I just like the skull really. So, that's why it went on mate.

T: Yeah.

P: It wasn't so much about the, the movie, or the book or the graphic novel or whatever it comes from. I don't know much about it at all, so, if I bump into some big Punisher fan, I'm gonna be going 'Sorry, man, I just like the skull…'

T: No one knows, you know, no one knows!

P: A lot of it's off Rob Zombie's jacket, to be quite honest, if you look on *La Sexorcisto,* I can't remember when that album came out, it was maybe '94 or around that time,

T: Yeah, I don't really know, yeah.

P: He's got an *awesome* jacket and he's got Kiss, he's got Kiss patches, he's got Metallica, all kind of coloured in and all these luminous colours and stuff. In the way he wanted, but in like a homage to those bands. And he had loads of skulls like these [points to jacket], I wanted loads of skulls too.
He had like, kind of more normal looking skulls, I've kind of gone…I found it, I like the Punisher skull, I don't know much about Punisher, but, there's something different about it.

T: Yeah. It's good. It was a good comic, I used to read it.

P: Yeah, I might have to catch up on it now, so I know what I'm on about!

T: Yeah, and you were saying about wearing this out, do you kind of wear it everywhere, or…you know, do you wear it to gigs and things?

P: Nah, well, it's very *new*…

T: Right.

P: It's certainly, it's certainly going to be part of my stage attire in the future.

T: Oh yeah, wear it on stage yeah.

P: When I play down the local pub, at that heady level!

T: Yeah.

P: Rock n Roll existence!

T: Yeah.

P: I'll certainly wear it to an event like this, it's an on-going, as I say it's an on-going project. I'll probably wear it to some gigs when I go to London. Because I come from Maidenhead, so London or Oxford or Reading is the places I'd probably go to.

T: Yeah, OK.

P: Yeah I'll wear it. I mean, to be honest I'm at a point now in my life where I don't give a shit what people think. And I'm quite happy with that. Never used to be, when it was all peer-group pressure.

T: Yeah, you get over it a bit.

P: Like 'Oh my god, I'm not wearing the right band t-shirt today!'…I don't give a fuck anymore.

T: Yeah, have you looked on…'cause there's forums, aren't there, where people post jackets and talk about them. Have you got much into that?

P: I might have, to be quite honest I might have, I think I…when I was looking at doing a battle vest, I did see loads of guys who actually made them, and there was other sites that…actually gave you ideas about how to do it, not so much about what you should have, but how to go about getting it.

T: Yeah

P: In theory you could have any old jacket.

T: Absolutely, yeah.

P: But no, yeah I did look at that, you know, I did, but I wouldn't say, in the end, when I got all the bits together I just went by what I thought…

T: You just did your own thing.

P: I mean, I see a lot of guys with the battle jackets and they have a lot of the patches really close, which is cool, there's nothing wrong with that, but I've already got…quids worth of badges on here already so…

T: You prefer it a bit more spaced out and…

P: I might, well, I might move them, who knows, I might move them one day.

T: When you feel like doing a bit more sewing!

P: Yeah

T: Or getting someone else to!

P: Yeah, um well, it's usually me who does it. My girlfriend's not really, it's good – I've kind of converted her to Iron Maiden. So we're working, you know, but she's not really a metal-head, you know. But she understands things a little bit more now so…

T: You're educating her!

P: Absolutely, she's understanding shit now so that's fine!

T: Cool.

P: But yeah the jacket, it's an on-going thing. I might take the patches off, I might move them closer together, I don't know, it depends. I've got [examines jacket looking for a particular patch] I can't find it right now, but I've got a Tool patch. I love Tool! They're one of my favourite bands, but I just didn't have the badge, I just didn't think of it. They're different to Iron Maiden, they're nothing kind of like them really. But I kept a space here [indicates] so that I could stick *a* band. I like, I mean I like a lot of different stuff, um Tool, Celtic Frost, Crowbar, they're all different bands to each other. I mean, I quite like music that isn't really described as metal. It doesn't *have* to be.

T: Yeah.

P: But when you're doing a heavy metal jacket, you always go for what is heavy metal – what's the point otherwise? But then again maybe that's because I'm trying to fit in with the whole *thing*, I dunno. But I know what I like, so. I dunno.

T: No, that makes a lot of sense, yeah. Cool, well, thank you very much Paul.

P: Thank you very much, I'm sorry I didn't ….that out.

T: No no, I think that's cool, I think we'll…

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Tony

Friday 4th July 2014 18.47

Tom Cardwell: So, as I say, it's a PhD project, I'm kind of interested in your jacket, how you've made it and the idea behind it, all that kind of thing so maybe you could start by telling me how old it is…

Tony: This is actually a new jacket…

TC: Oh is it?

T: Yeah, my old one's so tattered and torn and battered that I had to retire it. It had been to I dunno, umpteen festivals and gigs all over the world, it was…knackered basically. So, it was time for a new one, and I only actually finished it on, erm, Monday, put the last patch on Monday yeah so…

TC: Oh wow, which was the last patch?

T: The three across the top – the Motley Crue, Poison and Aerosmith ones were the last three, yeah.

TC: So the old one, have you still got it?

T: No!

TC: No? It's dead.

T: It's dead! I burnt it.

TC: OK!

T: In time-honoured tradition I burnt it, yeah.

TC: OK. So how long did you have the old one do you think?

T: Oh, 20 years. About 20 years yeah. There was a lot of bands on there that I'm not necessarily into so much any more. A lot of the old trad metal bands like Dio and stuff like that. But I'm not really into that anymore, so. Deep Purple, stuff like that. That's why I didn't…a few of the patches on there I've kept. So there's a few of the patches on here are old ones, from my old jacket. Only a couple, but yeah.

TC: So, the stuff you're listening to now has kind of moved on a bit.

T: Yeah, I've kind of…I've mellowed out a little bit, to be honest. I still like the old, all the thrash and that, but…I used to be a total thrash-head, you know Exodus, Violence, Metallica obviously, all those old bands, Slayer…I still like them but I'm a lot more into the rock music now, classic rock, stuff like that, and a lot of the old hair metal bands as well still, which I've got on there, so…A few of the new bands coming out now I quite like, and they're represented on there as well.

TC: So how long did it take you to make this one?

T: This one took me about, I guess about a month.

TC: Right…

T: Erm, got a jacket…but, I wasn't sure what other patches I wanted to put on it really so I went through all the websites and what-have-you, and eBay and what-have-you, and just basically anything that took my fancy really, just bands I liked.

TC: Yeah

T: There's a few bands on there I specifically wanted a badge for, er, Hardcore Superstar being one of them – quite hard to find badges for them, but they're one of my main bands so, yeah that was basically it really.
And I didn't want to fill it up too much either. Like a lot of the ones you see they're totally covered –

TC: Yeah

T: I didn't want to do that, I wanted to tone it down and keep it a bit subtle, which I think I've done so…

TC: Yeah, it's nice.

T: Especially on the front.

TC: Yeah. It seems like you've pretty much gone for black and white as a colour scheme?

T: Yeah, I did try to on the front…I'll take it off so I can see it. I did want to…stick totally to black and white…but erm…again, that one there, that's a Hardcore Superstar badge – I couldn't find another badge that I wanted to put there so I thought 'It doesn't look too bad with the black and white theme'…

TC: No, it looks great.

T: Also, I got a bit of red in that one [points to a military heroes charity patch]. That means a lot to me as well, so…

TC: What does that mean?

T: Well that's just my respect for all the troops. That have put in for us, for the past and present. I've got a lot of time for 'em, a lot of respect for 'em. And I just wanted to show that on my jacket as well.

TC: Yeah.

T: So, on the front, I really went for attitude. I went, you know, I've got the finger on there, the horns, I went for rock'n'fuckin'roll on there. I wanted a bit of attitude on there, so. But yeah, I wanted to keep it…I'm a patriot so, I wanted to have that on there. But yeah, it was, it was keep it simple, you know.

TC: You know it really stands out, you know. The white and the, the strong images they're kind of, very eye-catching, yeah.
Tell us about the back.

T: Yeah, the back is, er, the erm Motorhead one, I'm a huge Motorhead fan, but I just don't think you can beat a Motorhead patch in the middle of the jacket…

TC: It's a fantastic image isn't it…

T: It's the image, of the war-pig and everything so, that to me, that says who you are. Straightaway, without you…you know, 'cause everyone's heard of Motorhead, everyone knows what they are, get it on there. Iron Maiden, I've always been a Maiden fan, with…I tell you I never wear Iron Maiden t-shirts…

TC: Right…

T: No, I always think you get branded as a bit of a geek.

TC: Oh really?

T: Yeah, I think there's something geekish about wearing an Iron Maiden t-shirt.

TC: What, you don't like the artwork or…?

T: I love the artwork, I think it's just the, erm, I think it's because Maiden aren't cool to the non-metal fraternity. Bands like Metallica and Guns'n'Roses are cool, but Maiden are seen as a bit geeky, so that's why I don't like wearing their t-shirts but I do love 'em as a band, so I still wanted a patch on there.

TC: Yeah, definitely.

T: Erm, you got Metallica on there. Always been a huge Metallica fan, yeah, that's my favourite album that they've ever done [indicates Metallica *Kill 'Em All* patch]

TC: It's still their best album, isn't it?

T: It's still their best album, so that's why that's on there.

TC: Yeah.

T: Guns N' Roses, greatest rock'n'roll band that ever lived, without a shadow of a doubt, and erm, Avenged Sevenfold, I don't mind 'em, I'm not a huge fan but it's…I liked the badge, so, and I wanted one that was like black and white, to sit under the Maiden one so it looked quite good and

there's a bit of attitude on there. Rob Zombie, he's quite a bit out of place on this jacket really, but I really love Rob Zombie, he's one of my favourites at the moment, so I thought I'd put him on there. Erm, that's an old AC/DC one that came from my old jacket…

TC: Oh did it? OK

T: Yeah, I had an old, old AC/DC badge on there I've had to replace, so that one's only about five years old. The Alice Cooper one is relatively new…that's off of…oh, the Almighty one's off my old jacket. So that patch is over 20 years old, as is the Wolfsbane one. The Skid Row one's off my old jacket. Erm, the Volbeat one's new, Airbourne one's new. But the Slash one, I actually found that one, I've just had my girlfriend move in with me, and I was clearing out a load of drawers and I found it at the bottom of the drawer. I didn't even know I had it so I thought I'd stick it on, why not?

TC: Yeah

T: The Hardcore Superstar one, that's a new one.

TC: So those are quite hard to find are they?

T: Yeah, I actually went over to…I can't remember what the website was now, but they were selling a Hardcore Superstar patch that was going to go right across the back, but when I sent, and when it turned up it wasn't in… then it was that one, and the one on the front, and a key ring, and there was a hand-written note in there saying 'Sorry, the one you ordered was out of stock, we've sent you this, I hope it's ok'. So, I was a bit pissed, but fair enough.
So that's when I had to go on a last minute search for a big one to go across the top.

TC: Yeah.

T: And I found that on, found that on Amazon.

TC: Right.

T: It's actually a guy in Thailand selling that.

TC: Yeah, they're making a lot of them over there now aren't they, yeah.

T: Yeah. That's basically it, really.

TC: Ok, and did you, kind of, play about with where they were going to go quite a lot? Move them around a bit and…

T: Yeah, I actually had, when the original plan was to put the Hardcore Superstar one on there, I actually had a Motley Crue one there. But I didn't want the same band on there twice.

TC: Right.

T: And I've got a Hardcore Superstar one on there but…

TC: Yeah, but it's on the other side.

T: So, that's why I took that off. But I did…yeah, these four were…as I say it was a Motley Crue one, but these four fell in place…and I had a little bit of thinking about what to do around here…but, I think it's quite well balanced, works quite well.

TC: Yeah. It's really striking, definitely from a distance, yeah.

T: I'd probably swap these two over if I had a chance. 'Cause I've got too much green down there.

TC: Yeah, alternate it.

T: So I might put that one over there eventually.

TC: And these buttons with the little horns symbol?

T: Well that's because it comes from an online company called EMP.

TC: Ah, OK.

T: They're like a metal online re-saler (sic).

TC: OK. So they make the jackets?

T: Yeah, that's their logo you see. Yeah, it's their own jacket.

TC: Oh right. Well, that's cool.

T: So yeah, just don't photograph that [indicates jacket size label showing it to be XXL].

TC: And have you posted this online?

T: No.

TC: You don't do any of that?

T: No. I'm not a big fan of online and all that. I do my shopping on there and that's it.

TC: That's it, yeah? Fair enough.

T: So yeah, that's it really.

TC: OK. So it sounds like you've been into metal a pretty long time then?

T: Oh yeah, well, I'm 40 now. I suppose I got into it when I was 13. 13/14.

TC: Yeah.

T: It was actually *Kill 'Em All.* Someone at school lent me *Kill 'Em All.* And I turned it on and I was just like, I'd heard…I was listening to Def Leppard, Guns'n'Roses, erm, you know, a few other bands like that, but they lent me *Kill 'Em All* and it just absolutely blew my mind. Because, you know, I try to say it to a lot of the kids now and say, you know, 'listen to that album, and imagine you'd never heard anything like that before.' Like, you'd never heard Motorhead, or, any of these bands that are out now, you know, Avenged Sevenfold and Five Finger Death Punch. You know, imagine you'd never heard any of that and you listen to that album.

TC: Cliff Burton as well!

T: Well yeah. It's like a kick in the nuts! And from that moment on I was hooked. And there was a couple of guys at school who were already into metal. They had the long hair and what-have-you. So I hooked up with them, and just learned as much as I could off of them. Started borrowing their cassettes as it was in those days. Making the old mix tapes, you know. Happy days.

TC: Do you remember, was it the Friday Night Rock Show? Used to be on?

T: Yeah, yeah, I remember that, yeah.

TC: And the thing on TV, um, who was the guy (who) always used to say like 'Droogies, losers….' Do you know who I mean?

T: I know, I know who you mean I can't think of his name.

TC: That was called like….

T: There used to be a show on called 'Raw'

TC: Maybe it was 'Raw Power'

T: 'Raw Power'! Yeah, that's it!

TC: And he was on the end of there, wasn't he? Always doing his weird things.

T: Yeah, that's it.

TC: Yeah, I remember that.

T: I used to watch that. Then you had 'Headbangers Ball' on MTV as well.

TC: Yeah that's right.

T: That was good. Yeah, all those great old days. A lot of it, it's kind of weird I think, 'cause, I think the metal scene now, it's kind of bigger than it's ever been, but it's not. Which actually don't make sense. Like you had

all those shows, in the ‘80s and ‘90s, but metal now, you haven’t got any of that now, it’s all gone.

TC: It’s all kind of fragmented.

T: (Yet) it’s bigger now than it’s ever been. ‘Cause you got two metal festivals doing the circuits, you’ve got Black Sabbath headlining Hyde Park, you’ve had Aerosmith headlining Clapham Common the other…wherever it was, the other…Metallica at Glastonbury of course…you know, in the ‘80s you had one, one-day festival a year and that was it. So it was kind of bigger back then, but it’s bigger now, it doesn’t make sense but it’s a good time, it’s a good time to be into music.

TC: Oh definitely. I think maybe there’s a difference as well when you used to have to, you know, you’d wait for the radio show or the TV show, you had to stay up and watch it. And like you say you had to make the tapes or get it off your friend, and I can remember that. And…this was one of the first albums I had actually [indicates Guns’n’Roses patch], yeah, *Appetite for Destruction*, yeah.

T: Still one of my favourites!

TC: Yeah, it’s great, yeah. And Megadeth, I think, *Peace Sells,* that was one of my first…

T: That was one of my first albums as well, yeah.

TC: I remember getting tapes off people of those, yeah.

T: Yeah, that’s it. You heard ‘em round your mates’ (and borrowed them) and by the time you got ‘em back, you couldn’t hear ‘em!

TC: They'd all be worn out, wouldn't they? Yeah! But….yeah. But that's great. Well it's good to hear about what it means to you and, you know, and one thing I'm definitely aware of is how much thought people put in and kind of, the time, as well as just buying the patches, and working out, like you say, kind of, where to put them, and all that kind of thing, so…

T: Yeah. It's a bit sad really isn't it?!

TC: No, I think it's good! I think, I think it's important, you know? That's why I'm doing the project, 'cause I think it's important. But yeah, well thanks very much.

T: That's all right, no worries.

TC: It's good to hear what you think, and um…

T: Have a good day, I hope your PhD goes alright!

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Dave

Saturday 5th July 2014 17.23 – Duration 4 mins 07 seconds

Tom Cardwell: So Dave, can you tell me about how long you've been making the jacket?

Dave: Yeah sure, so it started actually when I was er…I saw Maiden at the O2, last year in July.

T: OK, yeah, we were there!

D: Yeah? OK, there you go. So there was a few guys kicking around there wearing exactly this sort of thing, that I hadn't really seen since I was a kid.

T: Right.

D: And I thought 'There you go, that's…I want a piece of that! Let's start getting some bits and pieces together.' That's where it came from.

T: So it's been done over about the last year?

D: Yeah, since July last year. Yeah, literally, pretty much bang on a year, yeah.

T: And how did you start it off? Did you buy loads of patches or did you just buy one?

D: Yeah that's it, so (I) found just a, you know, just a sort of random denim jacket at a market or whatever, so I could cut it up and tailor it to fit exactly, and all the rest. Went to…I live in Camberley, there's a place called the Rock Box, they have a website and all the rest of it, I went there, bought a load of patches – initially to put on, or so I thought! It filled hardly any space, and since then I've been sort of trawling internet sites, eBay etc. etc., buying as many old school sort of cool ones as I can. Them, interspersed with a couple of the new release ones and whatever else.

T: And er, in selecting the bands, did you just go for everyone you listen to or where there….?

D: Yeah, exactly that, so obviously the main two are Maiden and Metallica 'cause they're the two that I absolutely love, and you know, the other bits and pieces on there so, Megadeth, Bullet for my Valentine, Disturbed, they're kind of on there to a lesser extent, they're just some of the other bands that I like.
I don't think you should have, just like, random bands on there that you don't listen to but just 'cause the artwork's cool, 'cause there's any number of those (that) you could put on. But yeah, so I've gone specifically for bands that I like and, you know…

T: And have you been listening to these bands for a lot of time, like a long time or…?

D: Do you know I've been a fan of Metallica for *twenty-one years*, tomorrow night's the first time I get to see them live! 'Cause I'm in the army, and the army always has something *better* for me to do than go and see Metallica when they play the UK! So yeah, over two decades I've been a fan, yeah.

T: Oh right! So, do you travel around a lot in the army or…are you always moving?

D: Yeah, yeah. Exactly, yeah.

T: OK. So you haven't got to follow bands round and…?

D: I can never do that. It's just so unpredictable. Like this weekend, I could only book the tickets for this on Tuesday last week. Because up until then I was absolutely definitely working this weekend, then all of a sudden I wasn't. So I jumped on the opportunity and booked the tickets and yeah, here I am!

Jon Cardwell (photographer): So there were still tickets left then were there?

D: There were, yeah. There's still them now! On the website they're saying 'turn up and pay on the gate', they're still available now, yeah.

T: That's surprising, isn't it? And you were just saying about how you kind of moved things around a bit. How did you decide where to put all the different patches, was there kind of quite a lot of decisions in it or…?

D: Yeah, do you know what it's more about…I like to go for a little bit of symmetry, on the back at least. The front's kind of a little bit more random, the back is more symmetry. So it's…I'll move things according to where I can fit something the other side, if that makes any sense at all? And the fact that it's not quite limited to two bands but it's primarily those two (that are) my absolute favourites, it makes the symmetry that much easier to achieve. That's how I've gone for it. And it's just fitting in a bit of space 'cause I quite like the border of being able to see a little bit of denim around it. Whereas a lot of people go for the full-on covered, can't see

anything of the jacket underneath, and I like to see a bit of border. Maybe that's my artistic side coming out!

T: Yeah, that's good. And this patch here [indicates military insignia on collar of Dave's jacket] is that related to, to your work?

D: Yeah, that's my company in the army, yeah.

T: Oh, right!

D: That's got significance that patch, it's been to war!

T: Oh right, yeah. Do you feel like there's any…'Cause I'm quite interested in these jackets and maybe a history of military uniform. Do you think there's a relationship, in any kind of way?

D: Um…I suppose one could be found if you looked hard enough, but it's not something I've particularly….I've never thought about it and it's not something I consciously think about but maybe, if you wanted to look into that, I'm sure you could find an angle where you could link the two, I don't know…

T: OK, cool, well I think that's great. You've told us a bit about the history and er, what it means to you and yeah, that's excellent. OK, thank you very much…

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Alex

Saturday 5th July 2014 17.45 – Duration 7 mins 22 seconds

Tom Cardwell: So it's Alex?

Alex: Alex (says last name)

T: Cool. Can you tell me how long you've had your jacket?

A: I reckon I've probably had it about eleven years.

T: OK. Wow.

A: Yeah, it's come a long way!

T: Yeah. And has it kind of evolved? Have you put more patches onto it?

A: It actually has. It started off with a lot *more* patches, and gradually over time they've fallen off, and I've added, erm, other patches, sort of, more…other bands that I'm into sort of right now, than anything. But er, to be honest I would say that it's probably been about six or seven years since I've added a new patch to it. I actually don't wear it too often anymore, it's my gig jacket, you know, that kind of thing. But yeah, it's…all bands I love, I just want to represent those bands when I'm out and about.

T: So you've got Maiden on there, obviously…

A: Yeah, (unintelligible) Aerosmith, some AC/DC…

T: Yeah, OK, some Pantera…

A: A lot of classics. I've got the In Flames one on the arm. That was a bitch to sew on! Yeah, so if that falls off I'll be gutted 'cause it took me about two days to sew it on! But yeah, worth it.

T: So you sew them all on yourself?

A: Yeah, yeah. They're mostly sewn on, some of them were iron-on. You know, the cheating way, but…it's easier sometimes on a denim jacket with a patch…it's quite an effort so…

T: Yeah. It's quite interesting 'cause I guess you're…more of the people with denim jackets here are men, but it's interesting that, like, that they're all sewing on their patches themselves…

A: I bet their mums' (are) doing for them! Yeah, totally, there's no way they're sewing them on themselves! Whereas I *did* sew all mine on.

T: Do you think the sewing's an important part of it?

A: Um, I think it's definitely dedication and a project, and it's not easy, it's fiddly and, you know, you have to sort of really want it, I think, 'cause, yeah, it's an on-going thing. And they're all falling off as well, so I need to re-do some of them. And I mean I *will,* 'cause it's my jacket, I've had it for so long and…yeah, I enjoy wearing it.

T: Is there an element of – kind of like – I don't know, autobiography, for you, like a sense of – you know when you got different patches and…

A: Yep! It is, um, I didn't actually sew the patches on until I had enough to do the jacket because I didn't want to have like a couple of patches on a jacket, that'd be a bit random, um, but I did collect the patches as I went. And so most of the bands I've seen, and the occasional one that I *haven't* seen. I've got a Pantera one, and I obviously can't see them…so I've erm, just sewn them on out of a bit of loyalty rather than anything else but…erm, it is definitely representational of my…youth, of my life, yeah.

T: Yeah. So you've been into metal for quite a while?

A: Yeah! I've been into metal…everyone thought I was going to grow out of it…I got into metal about twelve or thirteen…well, grunge originally, which escalated, and yeah, it's been a work in progress. I'm nearly thirty and everyone said 'Oh, it's just a phase, it's just a phase!'…here I am with my jacket! – Fuck 'em!

T: Have you got a lot of friends who are into it as well?

A: Erm, I do in Scotland, a lot of friends who are into it, but I actually live in New Zealand so er…

T: Oh right, OK!

A: …there there's not as big a metal scene as here. But that's why I'm at this festival.

Jon Cardwell (photographer): You came back from New Zealand to go?

A: Yeah, pretty much. I go back to New Zealand on Tuesday so, yeah.

T: Oh wow, OK.

A: There's no Kiwi bands on there but the metal scene (there) is…shit really.

T: Yeah, OK. You've not really got any Scottish bands either.

A: Not really! But I do have Iron Maiden and there's the Clansmen so I feel a really strong Scottish like, link to Iron Maiden because of the Clansmen. I met Blaze Bailey so…

T: So there's a few…like Ginger Wildheart's playing isn't he? This year?

A: I don't know…

T: I think he is, but anyway.

A: Right. I've emigrated a long time ago though so I'm sort of out-of-touch with it. But I did see Alestorm earlier, and they're Scottish so…but I don't have their patch because…I'm not really that into them. But you never know, maybe. They were playing well.

J: Were they good?

A: They actually were really good! I've seen them before, and I remember liking them at the time but then seeing them here I was like 'I definitely like them!'.

T: Cool! Erm, OK. Is there anything else that's significant to you about the jacket that we haven't talked about? I don't know…

A: I would say it's probably one of my prized possessions. Although I don't wear it day-to-day these days, I would kill someone over it. Like it's *so* meaningful to me. I was in Loch Lomond with my dad last week and got

my jacket out for a little bit of a walk and my dad's like 'Oh that jacket's so old!' I was like 'Yeah, it is!' But I still have it, and I'll have it 'till the day I die. Er, unfortunately it's a small size so if I fatten up a bit then it's…but I'll still keep it! Yeah, it's been through thick and thin. Every gig I've been to, this has been worn so…it's so sentimental it's unbelievable.

T: Yeah, and obviously to people, like the kind of people here all recognise the bands and there's a kind of affiliation with each other, you know you're all into those bands.

A: Absolutely! As soon as you come to a gig like this you have this, sort of, this thing in common with everybody that's here, and yeah the jacket I guess represents it. T-shirts are just, sort of, one band all the time, and sometimes I just want to say 'Well actually I do like a variety of music – I like Aerosmith, Carcass…' You know I wanna show off the range of music that I like, so yeah, but it's a, it's a talking point. Sometimes people tap you on the shoulder and say 'Hey yeah, that's a cool patch' (and I'm like) 'Sweet!' so it's a, it's a good thing to have.

T: So do you think also, with like the t-shirts, like anyone can buy a t-shirt in like five minutes and put it on, whereas this takes some time and thought?

A: Of course! 'Cause, this is a *personal* thing. You can't go and *buy* a jacket like this. And why would you, if you could? 'Cause, it doesn't make sense. Erm, but a t-shirt you just buy it at a gig or whatever and it will probably gather dust at home, but your jacket represents everything about music that you love.

T: Yeah, absolutely. But I guess, also…I mean, what about in terms of people outside of the metal scene, like say you wore this out and about,

erm, do you feel like there's a kind of message to the rest of society as well, like 'This is who I am'?

A: Absolutely! I really enjoy dressing in the most sort of mainstream kind of, you know, fashionable clothes, then chucking this on top. 'Cause people are like 'What?!' You know, they don't get it. It's like a weird, sort of, thing for them. I love that even more, it's shocking for normal people. I don't look particularly rocky day-to-day, but then I put this on, then I'm just showing everyone what I'm like, somehow. That's what I think.

T: Yeah, brilliant. OK. And the last question maybe, what about where to put which patches? Was that something that just evolved or were there quite…

A: It's just evolved yeah, I mean, as I said earlier, the In Flames one, that was an arm patch there, there's no way you could've put that anywhere else. And yeah, there was a bit of design in it, but erm, mostly it's just been a work in progress. No real thought behind it, just adding to it, you know, and if something starts falling off, just put something else on and…yeah. It's a work in progress.

T: Brilliant! OK, well it's great to see and thanks for talking to us.

A: No problem.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Eleanor and Jemima

Saturday 5th July 2014 18.08 – Duration 14 mins 14 seconds

Tom Cardwell: OK, we're on now…can you just tell us your first names again?

Eleanor: Eleanor

Jemima: And Jemima

T: Jemima, that's right. OK…I don't know…so, first of all, how long have you been making the jackets? Are they newish or…

E: Good question!

J: Yours is older than mine. But this is version two.

E: Mine *is* older…but I've been wearing denim jackets since the dawn of time! I started decorating them. Originally because I had a tear on my shoulder and I wanted to put a patch over it, to repair it. I actually put it underneath…

J: You had that one [indicates patch]

E: I put it underneath so you could see the patch but it was ripped around the edges, so that was cool. But that jacket eventually disintegrated completely, so I got this one. So yeah, that's probably about two, three years, no maybe two…

J: Two, ‘cause I think mine’s about a year and a half.

T: So what is it about denim jackets, you said you’ve always worn them? What do you like about them?

E: I just love them! They’re just…they’re comfortable, but cool at the same time…

J: It’s that cotton man!

E: Exactly! You’ve got to have comfort! A layer. I like layers!

J: Continue talking, I’ll sort out the beetles [removing insects from Eleanor’s hair]

T: So, both of you it’s been a couple of years, and have they…did you get all the patches straightaway, and make them up or have they evolved?

E: No, gradually. Like I said, I had my Iron Maiden patch just around the house, ‘cause I just love Maiden, that was a good place to start. And then I found a couple more – the Slipknot one, and Metallica, ‘cause my brother loved them when he was in his teens, so I kind of adopted that, and then just developed it really. Any bands that I loved I kind of researched or I would find them in shops and go ‘Oh, I love that band, I’ll have one’, and then developed it like that. Or if I start to like a band, I like to sort of, I don’t know…mark it with a patch, does that make sense?

T: Yeah, yeah.

E: Like yeah, when we see a good band live, like get a patch to show…

J: *When* they sell patches! We'd have so many more if more bands made patches. It's very few that actually…it's either like *death* metal or like old school metal. It's very rare that you actually get…

E: My Franz Ferdinand patch, on the bottom…

T: Oh yeah, I saw that…

E: It's really unusual, because bands like that don't tend to make patches. And, you know, I have a soft spot for them. But like I say, I like to mix it up. Have some metal ones and some alternative rock. Why not?

T: So you guys are into kind of…quite a range of types of music.

E: I'd say I'm more alternative rock…than you [indicates Jemima]

J: Than I am, yeah.

T: [To Jemima] How would you describe your (music taste)…

J: Um, I think I like pretty much everything, except…

E: We were literally just having this discussion!

J: Except, er, Franz Ferdinand [laughs] and er, R&B! This was our discussion. And jazz. Not into jazz! It also tends to be that you can't get like a patch that…I'm trying to think of an example…of somebody I like that isn't…um…a classic patch wearer…You couldn't get a patch that said Keisha on it! It just wouldn't happen. Although I think I'd wear one of those! I just think it'd be…far more varied if we could…

E: We can't find a Joan Jett one!

J: Oh my god we've been looking for so long!

E: I actually just got a cherry patch and then made, like appliqued a bomb on!

J: For the Cherry Bomb!

T: Well that's pretty cool, like making your own things, like customising…

E: Yeah, that's what we were talking about. That's why we want to get into it a little bit more, 'cause I paint, I'm a painter so…I really want to get some fabric paint and start…imitating band logos and stuff, 'cause I think that would work out.

T: And what about painting straight onto the jacket? 'Cause some people do that don't they?

E: Yeah, that's cool.

J: If you've got a faux leather jacket that'd be cool.

T: Yeah, leather's quite good for painting on isn't it?

E: Definitely. It looks awesome.

J: Also you get that kind of like cracked effect…

E: Yeah.

T: So, do you wear these all the time, or just for gigs or…?

E: Pretty much.

J: Pretty much all the time! Until it gets too cold, then we have to wear coats, but we don't like it.

E: The winter's a bad season for us!

J: It's a bad time! We really hate it!

T: Well you could always do the vest, couldn't you? Where you take the sleeves off then you wear it over the top.

J: That's true. That's actually a really good idea.

E: Over a parka it might not really work!

J: Yeah [laughs].

E: Just to keep the badges going, yeah.

J: Or just sew them onto the parka! It would look horrific but…

E: It's nice to express yourself using your clothing, I don't know…

Sometimes like you say if you see an alternative person and you're not wearing the jacket you sometime think…

J: I feel so out of place! I feel like…

E: He doesn't know I'm metal!

J: I'm one of you!

T: So it's about…it's kind of about a statement that you're a part of that?

E: I guess it is. At the end of the day it's clothes and it's a fashion thing isn't it? You wanna…you don't want to say that but…

J: The same with like paintings and tattoos and all that. It's an expression of what you like and…

T: Is that not about identity as well though?

E: Yeah, definitely.

T: I don't know if it's necessarily…it's not just a superficial thing is it? It is quite about who you are.

E: Yeah definitely, it's expressive. It is who you are. It's definitely important. I think we both find style quite an important thing.

J: Yeah, yeah. In a way that's probably not a good thing but it's…

E: But it goes hand-in-hand with the music.

J: Yeah that's true, that's very true.

T: So I guess it's…it's a look as well that's important in terms of people outside of that scene, like if you just walk around town or whatever…other people – you want them to see that you're part of something different.

E: Yeah, exactly!

J: Yeah that's exactly it.

E: Like, I get heckled all the time because of my hair, and I think 'Yeah, that's an awesome thing!' because it means I'm not like you! I'm not, you know, I want…I like to be a little bit different.

J: We get just like…as well…like York is not…it's not…

E: It's not a very versatile place!

J: Not a very diverse place, yeah.

T: Yeah, we went there…just for like a night. It seemed like…we saw a couple of fights…at night it can be a little bit…

J: Which is weird for the place…like if we went to Leeds we'd get far less…'cause it's a little bit more diverse but…

E: It's pretty unusual to find people like us, I think, in York, which is quite frustrating sometimes.

J: Yeah, oh yeah.

T: So would you go out more in Leeds or somewhere like that?

E: Probably, yeah. There aren't many places to go. There are a couple of more edgy rock bars.

T: OK. And would you kind of source stuff online as well? Would you look online?

J: We prefer to buy at gigs when we can, but also they're far more expensive when you buy them at a gig so you can see it at a gig then

eBay it later! I prefer to buy it at a gig. My favourite ones are ones I got at gigs as well. Like the Darkness one.

E: Because there's a memory attached to it as well.

T: Have you bought any here?

J: I really want the Knebworth…the like big Sonisphere one, but I have a thing about really big patches. I don't like wearing one massive patch that's like 'This is what I love above everything else!'.

E: It'd take up too much space, you know.

T: That's interesting because we were just talking to another girl with a jacket over there and she said exactly the same thing, but most of the guys with jackets seem to have one (large back patch).

J: Like *one* massive Maiden patch and then a few sort of dotted around!

E: Yeah, that is a pet peeve I think!

T: Yeah so I dunno, maybe that's a male/female thing, or maybe not?!

E: Yeah, maybe we want to show more off I guess…

T: So you want to fit more on?

E: We don't want to have all our eggs in one basket you know?

J: I don't have a favourite band. So I don't want people to think 'Oh, that person must love Iron Maiden above all the others…

E: Yeah, that's true.

J: I think it'd be a little bit different having a festival patch though because it'd be like 'I went to a festival, I really liked it' rather than 'It's my favourite thing ever!'

E: Knebworth!

J: Whoah!

T: Maybe you could just have the patch and not sew it on or something? Or have it on the inside!

J: Yeah! So for people who really know me!

E: Just flash it!

T: And what about where to put things? That's quite a big decision.

E: Definitely!

J: Oh that can take hours! I think that ours…from a lot of jackets that we see…ours have definite placement differences.

E: Definitely!

J: A lot of them tend to be like rows of square patches…

E: A lot of the guys actually tend to have really laid-out…

J: I'm going to take mine off so I can actually look at it!

E: Yeah…well thought-out I guess…

T: Regimented…

E: Yeah regimented structured jackets there. Which is…

J: Mine's definitely structured! But not in the same way.

E: Boys do it. But I prefer things to be a little bit out-of-place and a little bit…wonky and stuff like that.

J: I can see it now!

T: So you talked about being a painter. Do you think that some of the decisions about where to put things are a bit like how you'd decide…how to compose a painting or something like that?

E: Yeah definitely! I think it's similar…a similar thing. The same with colours, actually. Colour coordination. How to place it.

J: I'm sorry! They're attracted to the colour [picking insects out of Eleanor's hair]. There are so many in there!

E: I don't care anymore! Yeah, it's definitely important.

T: Um, Jemima, you were going to say about where you put things and…

J: Oh yeah, I'm massively into colour coordination!

E: This is the red area!

J: This is the red and black area! I don't know…it just feels wrong to put a red…I know the Rolling Stones patch is down there but…

E: It evens it out.

J: Yeah and then like black and white, we've got black and white on this side as well. I really like really shit patches as well! I don't like Free, but I bought it mostly because it's so shit!

T: So it's ironic is it?

J: Yeah! I do love the band Free, and this is the only patch that you can find of them, but it's just so like, bad….it's good!

E: It's so badly placed, it really, really pisses me off!

J: I love it! I love how it's just so bad!

T: And are you going to fill up that space eventually or is that staying? Do you want to keep that…

J: I'm just gonna – I think I'm just gonna work down – either buy the Knebworth one and put it in the middle or just work down and then work up and then…

T: OK, cool.

E: I think that looks better than if you don't have the entire thing covered, than just having it – at the top and then working your way down – that would look a bit strange I think.

T: And you've got some badges and things on the other side haven't you?

J: Many of the badges yeah. But I love really shit badges as well. I didn't buy any of the really shit ones though.

E: Any of the sort of band merch as well, like badges and patches just really disdains us (sic).

J: It's just fun, isn't it?

T: Do you alter them a lot? Do you move things around a lot?

E: Well yeah, like I say, this isn't the first jacket that I've done so I had to take them all off and put them back on which took…I did it in one day, which was foolish, 'cause my hand was killing me!

T: So you sew them all yourselves?

Both: Yeah, yeah.

J: It's cheating if you iron them on!

E: We hate that, we really do. 'Cause I did textiles and art and stuff like that. So that's my jam, I like sewing.

T: That's a good thing. And do you think that's important to the whole – everyone who does it – it's a kind of DIY thing?

E: Yeah, definitely, it's almost like the punk era you know? A lot of it was fashion, a lot of it was DIY, a lot of it was…

J: If you buy a jacket that's already patched up…

E: No, no!

J: …with patches on – that's not mine is it? You've not put yourself into it.

E: That's not the point is it? Yeah exactly, it is, isn't it? It's art – it'd be different if you were wearing a hand-me-down jacket, like your dad's jacket or something…

J: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

E: But if you've bought – you don't know that person and you've just bought a jacket – it's a bit…no, it's not personal is it?

T: And do you feel there's a certain amount of….again for everyone who makes these…do you feel there's an element of a kind of resistance to mass-produced consumer kind of stuff? Like most clothes are just made in a factory aren't they? And all the ethical problems that…maybe this is something that, you know, you're putting together yourself and it's a bit more…

J: Yeah, you've got something that is your own, and nobody else has that exact alignment of patches and everything.

E: Exactly. I love to shop in charity shops and things like that, and I would prefer to…like I wear a lot of my brother's old t-shirts, like I say, because it is more individual and it's not nice to you know, just shop on the high street. So where's the fun in that? I love it when you have to really…Jemima does!...I love it when you have to like, really search for something, like in a charity shop or any sort of…say vintage but, you know, it's any of that. You spend more time on it which means in the long run you're sort of more proud of it and yeah, it's your own style.

T: People do sell these (jackets) though, don't they? I saw one on eBay recently, and there's forums where people trade them and things like that.

E: Yeah. I've never really gone into the forums. That would be strange! But I think I'd be kicked out for having a jacket with Slipknot and Franz Ferdinand on – two completely different bands! It's probably not allowed! (laughs).

T: But yeah that (selling jackets) seems a bit against the main idea, doesn't it?

J: I wouldn't want to give it away, I wouldn't want somebody else wearing my jacket. That'd be horrible!

E: No, no! It's like when I see someone with my hair colour. I don't like it! Which is really stupid! It's rare! But it has been known to happen.

T: I've just realised we're missing the dogfight! Do you want to watch the dogfight? It's pretty good isn't it? Do you know about this? It's Bruce Dickinson from Iron Maiden who's flying one of these. And they're recreating the er…

J: We've seen his plane antics – his Spitfire lot – we weren't bothered…

T: So you're not Iron Maiden fans then?!

E: No, no, I am! It's just…

J: I am as well!

T: I suppose I shouldn't say that very loud 'round here!

J: They spent more time when we saw them on this kind of 'Ooh look at us'…

E: It's very theatrical, which I love, and again I do think it comes hand in hand with metal – like the Alice Cooper thing you've got to put on a show – but it did take away a little bit from the energy of it – all the costumes changes and everything…

J: It's like look at me, I'm a rock star, look how much money I have! Let's all drink Trooper! Give me money!

E: Like go back to the beginning and just like strip it down again.

T: I know what you mean, yeah.

E: It's true, it's just ostentatious.

T: Alright, cool. Was there anything else you wanted to say about them, or about…I dunno, we've talked about them quite a lot…

J: I think that's everything!

E: Yeah, I think so.

T: Well, that's good. Alright, well thank you very much!

E: No problem!

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Interviews – Bloodstock 08-10 August 2014

Chris

Saturday 9th August 2014 18.39 – Duration 13 mins 39 seconds

Tom Cardwell: So your name's Chris, is that right?

Chris: Yep.

T: Alright, nice one. OK, so I guess we're interested to know, you know, how long you've made the jacket, the story of how you put it together, kind of what's gone into it, all that kind of stuff.

C: All the sewing, I do it all myself. It's taken – to build what I've got now – is probably about three years. I stick all my wrist bands from festivals on there. It's like, sort of a medal strip.

T: Like a military…

C: Yeah.

T: Yeah, yeah.

C: It kinda just saves keeping 'em on my wrist all the time, 'cause it does my head in!

T: And is that a bit of a thing that…I've seen a few people (that) do that. Do a lot of people do it, or is it something you've just…

C: Before I did it I'd never seen anybody else do it. If other people are doing it (then) that's cool too.

T: Yeah. No, I just wondered if it was a thing among people who made jackets that was a particular thing that people picked up on?

C: I know a few of my friends have been copying (me) but…

T: So that's a way of commemorating stuff you've been to and all that, yeah.

C: I pretty much take it to every show and every festival I go to. I always try to get the inside of it signed [removes jacket to show musician signatures inside].

T: Oh, ok. So who's signed it?

C: I got most of the signatures last year actually, here. This one [indicates] is Grand Magus, that's 3 Inches of Blood, that's Dark Funeral, Hell, and there's a few dotted round from Tragedy that played Bloodstock last year. We met them at Hammerfest and they hung out with us after the signing. That was Corrosion of Conformity, we met them at Hammerfest this year. So I always like to try and get something done by everyone, if possible.

T: Yeah. So it's very much a kind of history of what you've been to – bands you've seen, bands you've met?

C: I just see it as (inaudible)…as I say I sew everything on there myself. I can't see people, like, getting their mums to do it…(inaudible)

T: yeah. I met someone yesterday who said he takes it to a shop and gets them to do it. But you feel it's important to do it yourself?

C: Yeah, I do. I've…I've fucked up my fingers so much from doing it, but I was like, 'Well, it looks good in the end!' so I did it.

T: Do you think it's interesting that…'cause obviously a lot of guys that make jackets probably *do* do it themselves, but there probably aren't many other areas of life where you get men doing lots of sewing. Especially not like, you know, something like metal where it's quite, like, macho…

C: Yeah, I've had a lot of funny looks from people saying 'What, you sew?!' I was like 'Yeah! Well look at the outcome!'

T: Yeah, I think that's quite an important part isn't it? The DIY thing.

C: Yeah. When you're doing it you can spend up to an hour on each patch, your back is killing, but if you're happy with it at the end, it's all worth it. I've taken 'em all off, put 'em back on so many times. You just wanna make more room or…

T: So you move them around?

C: Occasionally, yeah. Sometimes I get tired of where they are. Say one's like, a weird size there, I'll probably move that one to fit something else in.

T: Is that one pinned on 'cause you're going to sew it? [indicates Spider Man patch attached with safety pins]

C: That one's pinned on 'cause I tried to sew it and I ended up sewing the pocket shut, and I use the pockets.

T: Yeah yeah, yeah. So that's gonna stay like that?

C: Yeah, for now. I did glue it on but the glue was shit! It just came off.

T: Right. Do you ever get the iron-on ones?

C: It is iron-on! It just didn't stay.

T: Oh, it is.
C: Yeah. A few of them were as well, like that [indicates]. But they all peeled off so I just…

T: Then you sew 'em?

C: Yeah. It just reinforces it. 'Cause it's been through a lot! You want it to stay on.

T: When you say a lot you mean, like, mosh pits and things like that?

C: Well just like…'cause I don't wash it as well obviously, 'cause of the signatures. It's just been through loads. It comes from being crushed up against barriers, chucked around, loads of people touching it.

T: Have you got a lot of friends who make them as well?

C: I've got a few friends that make them, yeah. Some people got their aunties or somebody to do it for them. I tried showing my one mate how to sew, and he completely fucked it up!

T: Now he tries to get you to do it?!

C: Yeah! I was like, 'No, you do it!'

T: Yeah, you've got to do it yourself!

C: Yeah. I found out…'cause his jacket was almost like perfect, I said 'How did you do that?!', he was like 'Oh, my aunty did it for me!' – Dickhead!

T: How long have you been making this one?

C: Three years. I started it 2011.

T: Do you know what the first patch was?

C: That one [indicates Rob Zombie patch]

T: Right. Rob Zombie.

C: I bought it on eBay. I was searching for ages online to get a jacket that I liked and that would look good. So I bought that one, bought the jacket. That's been moved around about eight times! I made the backpatch myself.

T: Oh did you? Is that from a T-Shirt?

C: Yeah. It's an old shirt that I had from the 2007 tour. I just couldn't find any backpatches at a decent price that I liked. They were all weird shapes. So I just bit the bullet, cut it up and stuck it on.

T: I like the t-shirt ones, I like when people do that. There's something more kind of creative about it somehow.

C: Yeah. That took me two hours to sew on! My back at the time was killing me.

T: And then, in terms of the bands you've got on here, is it bands you've seen, or is it just the bands you most like?

C: It's mostly bands I've seen. I suppose there's a few that I haven't seen, I just really love their music. Like, AC/DC, Ratt, White Zombie, but, pretty much, most of them I've seen. Not Dissection 'cause they're not around. 'Cause I haven't seen them, I've seen members of the band in, like, other bands.

T: Yeah. How would you describe…would you see this as a mix of genres or how…?

C: Oh, definitely mixed! People always say to me, like, when they look at me from the back they don't know what to categorise my musical taste. 'Cause it goes, like, death metal, black metal, glam, rap, rock, groove…I think it's good to show, like, an eclectic music taste. Not sticking to one style.

T: Yeah. Do you feel that some people think that you should have just one type of thing on there?

C: There are a few people like that.

T: Not *you*, but think that for themselves they should or something?

C: There's a couple like that. I've seen like black metal ones and every single patch is like black and white, and it's all the same genre. You can't fuckin' read any of it.

T: Yeah. You don't know what the bands are called! That's a good point.

C: Each to their own! But I do like to mix it up ‘cause I can’t stand to listen to one genre all the time.

T: In terms of the whole culture of making jackets, how far back do you think that goes?

C: At least the ‘70s. Maybe to the ‘60s. I know like it started with biker gangs, say the Hell’s Angels in the ‘60s, they probably started it with their patches, and it probably just came into this community.

T: It seems to me, ‘cause I kind of grew up listening to metal, in my teens I remember people having jackets, and then recently since I started doing this project, it seems like there are a lot of people (who) started doing it again, and maybe it’s – not that it ever went away – but maybe it’s really coming back into – I don’t want to say fashion, but you know what I mean – people are doing it more it more than they used to, maybe. Why do you think people are more interested in them again now?

C: I think it’s just the aesthetic of it, to show what they like and who they’ve seen. It does have a story in a way.

T: It’s a personal story.

C: Yeah, ‘cause you’ll never see one exactly the same as another. Even if they’ve got the same patches they’re going to be in a different position and it’s going to have a different backpatch.

T: We met a guy yesterday who had been making his for like thirty years, and it went back right to when he was like sixteen.

C: That’s fantastic!

T: Yeah, so do you see yourself carrying this on?

C: Definitely! Like, a friend of ours back in Cardiff, she's got one from like 1982 and she's never washed hers either. It just feels like so raw…I can't think of the words. Like kind of primal. It's just completely worn in, so many patches on it. It just looked awesome.

T: Would you wear this…do you just wear this to gigs and festivals or do you wear it all the time?

C: I wear it pretty much all the time. It depends on the weather. If it's raining I don't want it to get ruined.

T: Yeah. So in terms of when you're somewhere like this obviously, you're…there's a sense in which you're telling other metal fans about what you're into, and I guess there's a kind of conversation that happens in the community, but when you're outside of…you know just out in normal life, what do you feel the jacket says to everyone else, you know, who maybe aren't…?

C: I don't know about that. I guess like people who are into the same sort of thing might come up to me and say 'Oh, that's pretty cool!' – who I listen to. The people who don't understand it'll probably just think 'He's got a weird jacket on'.

T: Do you feel that you're…that you want to give a message to people – normal non-metal people saying 'This is who I am' or are you not bothered about that?

C: Yeah, I couldn't care less. I just wear it because I love what I've made, and I just want to show it off.

T: Cool. And you've got a few other things on here like Judge Dredd…

C: Yeah. That [indicates a green circular plastic badge with no logo] I've had since I was about three years old! It's a shield from a sport figure. The handle broke off like about ten years ago but I never threw it away. So I thought I'd just stick it on there to commemorate listening to…well, like reading comics from when I was younger.

T: Brilliant! What's this? [indicates 'Comic Sans' pin badge]

C: I'm a graphic designer, and I fuckin' hate Comic Sans!

T: Yeah, so do I!

C: My girlfriend bought it for me for a laugh.

T: That's brilliant! So is it all about Helvetica then?

C: I like Futura a lot. Helvetica's overrated.

T: Yeah, that's the one everyone goes on about isn't it?

C: I've had three years of…(inaudible) actually.

T: Cool, well I'll let you…I don't know if you want to see the band or…

C: No, I'm not bothered, know what I mean?

T: OK

C: Like, I find the one that really throws people off is that one [indicates Wu Tang clan patch].

T: Yes. Yeah yeah yeah. Is that related to Wu Tang as well? [indicates circular patch above the other]

C: No, that's Star Wars.

T: Is it? Oh right, OK. I wondered if that was to do with the thirty-six chambers or something.

C: People see it and are like 'I thought you listened to metal!' I'm like, 'Yeah! I listen to them, too!'

T: I can't believe people still make that kind of divide, you know, 'cause even in the '90s when you had like Public Enemy and Aerosmith, you know, all those kind of things, and then all of the hardcore bands like Biohazard, you know like mixing up kind of hardcore and metal and hip hop. You know I think it's just such a false…yeah, they're different traditions but…

C: It's all music though.

T: Yeah, and they're both…I guess if you're into extreme music they're just different extremes aren't they?

C: Yeah, definitely.

T: You know, yeah. Cool. Well, um, yeah, it's really nice to see it and to hear, you know, your story about it.

C: It's nice to talk about it. I've never really been asked. Just like, you know, the usual questions like 'How long have you been sewing this?' and so on.

T: Yeah, well I think…I mean, I'm really interested in why people make them and how they're a really personal thing so it's good to hear about the choices that you make, and I guess if you're working in graphic design then some of the visual skill that you would have in your job you'd apply to this wouldn't you? Like how you're putting it together and…

C: Like for example following grids, like you can see they're fairly in grids, not perhaps all the way…

T: Yeah, and what about colour, do you kind of…?

C: I'm not too bothered about colour, as long as I like the patch.

T: Yeah, that's great.

C: Obviously I like a lot of red ones!

T: Yeah. Red, white and black seem to be the biggest colours generally in patches. Do you tend to buy them online or…?

C: I mostly get them at festivals. Like I've bought a few online, when I started building it up. But then I went to my first festival and just bought so many.

T: So you prefer to buy them at festivals?

C: They're better ones. They're better quality. You can see them, see how they're made.

T: Do you prefer the woven ones then?

C: Yeah definitely. Like I've got a printed one, that one [indicates Michael Jackson patch], and it's starting to crack. It makes it have a sort of vintage, old school look to it, but I don't know how long it's going to last though.

T: I never noticed that was Michael Jackson before, that's pretty cool! Where did you get that?

C: I got that off eBay.

T: That's great. Johnny Cash as well. Yeah, so it's quite a mix. Michael Jackson next to Morbid Angel – I doubt that happens very often! It's good.

C: The thing about it (the Michael Jackson patch) is it fitted between those two lines (seams on the jacket panel).

T: Oh, I see. Cool. Alright, well, yeah. I think that's good. Thanks very much Chris. I'll stop that now.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Pete

Saturday 9th August 2014 19.44 – Duration 40 mins 11 seconds

Tom Cardwell: So, you've been saying a bit just now about the story of the jacket, maybe you could just tell us about how it started and how long you've been making it…

Pete: This is actually my third battle jacket, I did my first one when I was about thirteen. That…whatever patches I could get hold of, of bands that I liked. Obviously I started assembling it, it started about…Obviously, I'm in my forties now so we're talking about 1984 I started doing this. There was a lot of patch jackets around, but more of them was coming from the bike side of things. I used to go underage drinking in this metal pub in Eastcote, called the Clay Pigeon that was run by Neil Cade (sp.?) who did the…Iron Maiden…He ran a metal club called the Soundhouse, used to be in East London, then it got moved to North London, then moved down to er, Eastcote. So this was the ultimate metal club, run by the guy who basically discovered Iron Maiden. And we all went down there and it was just wall-to-wall bikes and jackets and we were just like 'Awww!' you know, just like impressionable little teenagers listening to you know Iron Maiden and Saxon, like 'I'm 'avin' one of them!' And you know, so we all started just assembling the jackets, and realising how much it actually cost.
You'd think 'Patches are only £1.50! Well, hang about, what's fifty times £1.50?' That's a lot of money when you're thirteen in 1984!
Yeah so, just started putting together…I got into it, I started painting some of it, I know a bit about embroidery so…I've still got my original two battle jackets, with all the embroidery on them that I did.

T: Oh wow, OK.

P: It was something that…I could be a bit crafty and you know do that, and it was also cheaper, if you had massive logos on the back I could just sit there, you know if I had the patience I could just sit there with a needle and I could do it!
So, erm, I did it like that. Then that one died. It went in way too many pits and erm, got too much sweat damage and it literally started falling apart. If I washed it now, it would disintegrate. There's no way that it would survive a wash! It's on a hanger, gets all Fabreezed up, and just like sits there in the corner of the room, as a reminder…

T: That's the original.

P: Yeah, that's the original. The second one I did, it got modified a couple of times, and I used a lot of the patches from the second one for this one [indicates the jacket he is wearing], number three. There's a few sort of hangovers. I think there's two patches from my original battle jacket on here, and there's a handful from the second battle jacket, and the rest of them I kind of…I collect patches anyway, so I had quite a few sitting in drawers and photo albums, so I had you know, I had a good headstart, er, what I could put on here. And there was a bunch of backpatches that I basically couldn't get, or they was so long out-of-print that you'd have to pay fifty quid for them on eBay or something like that. And most of the bands that didn't have patches I wanted to represent, I just made 'em. So a lot of these are home-made. So this is er…obviously it's not going to come over on the audio but…[puts on 'to camera' voice] 'Pete is showing a hand-made Gong patch!...Which he is very proud of!'

T: Oh, ok! So how did you make that? Is that acrylic paint?

P: Yeah, it's a scan onto transfer paper, and then gone over with acrylic. But the detail's lovely, isn't it?

T: Yeah, it's fantastic!

P: I went down to a…what was it?...a 00000 sable brush! And thinned the paint down and I actually managed to get the lines in, that's hand brushed! That took me hours! I'm sitting there with one of those big magnifying lenses that old people use to read the newspaper, I'm sitting there just looking like 'Nyeeeeegh!' That took me about four hours to paint, but it worked!

T: You sound like someone who paints models as well, if you're using stuff like that?

P: No, I never got into that! I probably should've. I probably would have been quite good at it. But no, I'm not a model maker. I wanted to be a watch-maker, when I grew up. I loved working with really small things, detail, I just never did it. And I couldn't afford a horology course, so I work on guitars.

T: Oh is that your trade?

P: Yeah, that's what I do.

T: So what is it, you make guitars?

P: I used to, yeah, I used to have a workshop. I ran a guitar shop in West London, and we had a workshop out the back and I made about ten, twelve guitars. It was alright, knocked along. I only kept one of them. Yeah it's just something I do. I modify and repair them, I hot-rod 'em, you know, like a mechanic.

But as far as jackets are concerned I mean, basically, when I did this one, number three, I just thought 'I've got to do this properly' I mean obviously,

when you're young and you want to collect all the bands 'Ooh, I've got all these patches!' There's a lot of people walking round with patches of bands they're not really familiar with or they might know one song or, in some cases, I mean this happens more with t-shirts, but it happens with patches as well sometimes: 'I just liked the design', and they don't know who the band is!
You see people walking round and you go 'Oh wow, you like that band!' (they respond) 'Is it a band?' You know, like people wearing Ramones t-shirts they got from Primark, and most of them don't realise it's a band! And that's happened a few times on patches, you know, someone's got a really big, like, some band backpatch, I'm like 'Oh wow, cool, yeah!' 'What?' 'You like that band!' 'What?' 'Sepultura!' 'Yeah? What?' and you can see the confusion in their eyes. It's unusual, but it's happened. It's weird.

T: Do you think that's maybe a change in the way that things are now and that people will wear something for the look of it?

P: It's a fashion statement. No, no, that's gonna sound weird. It's a fashion statement on a fashion statement. This [indicates his jacket] is a fashion statement, sort of…

T: Well, but…

P: …but then making it look more appealing by, you know, I don't know, there's something really…I'm really precious about this whole thing…

T: Yeah.

P: They should represent your life. And in this case my life in bands. Like the bike jackets. You only get a patch if you've done something to get it. I mean, aside from any patch clubs, let's say 'Two year member of Burn Up

2004', you know, that sort of thing, you *earn* those badges by doing something for them, or going to a rally or whatever.

T: Yeah, you don't just choose them do you?

P: And you have to earn them by being there and getting it and saying 'I was there and here's the proof!' And that's how I treat this jacket. I only put on patches of bands that I have seen live, and that's a rule. There's loads of others I could stick on of bands that I've never had a chance to see 'cause they've either split up too early or 'cause they're you know, in Brazil or something, and I won't put 'em on. 'Cause this is documenting my life and my taste in music, and consequently there's a lot of non-metal stuff on here as well, which *really* fucks people off! The sort of, all your 'true metal heads' go 'How can you have *that* next to *that*?!' And I say 'Because I like 'em. Got a problem?!' You know. 'Have you ever listened to that band?' 'No, they're a punk band!' 'You might like 'em!' You know? That's the way I see it. It's just…it's a reflec…it's mostly thrash but there's some little treats on here!

T: So I guess you'd say it's about authenticity in a way?

P: Yeah, well that sounds a bit elitist if you put it that way. But I know what you mean. It has to be authentic, to you know…I've seen occasional things on eBay and…what's that website? Erm, Etsy. It's like a sort of arts and crafts type thing, you know, you makes it and you put it on here see? So yeah, you know people selling sort of Primark handbags but they've put on a nice pattern of rhinestones, so it's now fifty quid! And I've seen people selling ready-made patch jackets! 'Heavy metal look jackets'! And there was one, there was this famous meme that went round the internet last year, or round Facebook, of – I can't remember who it was – Chris Brown? I can't remember the guy – leather jacket painted up with Suicidal Tendencies, Excel, all bands like that, real cool hardcore bands, and he

didn't have a fuckin' clue what any of it was! His stylist had bought it and gone 'Wear that!' And that fucks me off, you know. If you're representing something, you should know what it is.
Catching people out who are wearing shirts with designs. You know, they bought it 'cause they like the design. I'm like 'You know that's a Nazi band don't you?!' 'What?' I've had that one a couple of times. 'Oh yeah, this is a really cool shirt, look, it's like in a graveyard and that.' 'Yeah, that's a Nazi band!' 'Is it? Oh.' 'Turn it inside out and fuck off!' [laughs]

T: Yeah, so you need to do your homework.

P: You need to know what you're wearing, you know? There's only so far you can go with it before you sound too precious and too elitist, but I do feel quite strongly about this. I've argued this to the nth degree online: 'Well why can't you wear a shirt 'cause it looks nice?' You know, I can understand why people would disagree with me, but most people kind of do agree. You know like that, that shirt, who you wearing that [indicates THCs t-shirt)? Are they a band? Have you got their albums?

T: This?

P: Yeah.

T: Well I haven't got their album but I know them, they're a Brighton hardcore band.

P: Yeah, exactly. There you go. You could be wearing that, you go 'That's a cool looking…I'm going to a metal fest to do a thing for my PhD, oh that looks a bit metal I'll wear that!' And someone could go 'Oh yeah, oh wicked, was you at that show?' and you're like 'What?' Embarrassing. Innit?

T: Well, yeah, if you don't know the band, yeah. Yeah, so…what was the first patch that you put on it?

P: What, the first one I put on this jacket? When I started assembling it?

T: Yeah.

P: Backpatch. The Motorhead backpatch. Which isn't actually a backpatch. I couldn't actually…most backpatches that you can buy are shit! They're never the right shape, or they're a little bit too small. I thought, 'Nah. Motorhead's my all-time favourite metal band, I'm gonna do this properly. Now where can I get a really big Motorhead backpatch from?' Looking round his room. 'Lots of t-shirts!' So I bought a fresh Motorhead shirt, of exactly the one that I wanted, cut it out, wonderweb nylon sticky stuff, put it on, hemmed the edge, bang! Straight on. That was the first one. Then I built everything around that. You know, start with the backpatch. That's the main thing. If you're going to have a battle jacket with only one patch on it, it's got to be a backpatch.

T: Do you think you've got to have a backpatch?

P: You don't. But if you want a backpatch, you can get away with having one patch. Either backpatch or bottom patch. And that looks right. If you're going to go the individual patches route, you've got to have at least eight or ten on there, otherwise it just looks stupid. There are people walking around here 'I've got twelve patches!' and they're sewn nice and neatly, equally spaced and they're sewn on by their mum, and it just looks…it looks wrong. You know, it's got to have a bit of, I dunno, chaos, to make it look right. I mean, obviously you're looking round at a lot of jackets this weekend, you know what I'm talking about. A lot of them are like brand-new looking jackets with brand-new patches all perfectly sewn on, with massive spaces in between and not much thought put into it. Like what

you have, 'You've made a jacket. Good. That's your first jacket. Now, next one, you're going to build up, doing that, then you're going to come up with some amazing work of art.'

I've seen some amazing jackets here this weekend. Some of them have been just individual patches, you know, no backpatch. You know, maybe seventy, eighty patch jackets. You know, a lot of work. A hell of a lot of work. Oh yeah and you've got to sew it yourself as well, don't get your mum to do it!

T: Most people seem to feel that but I've met a few people who say 'Oh no, I get someone else to do it'.

P: It's nice if you've done it yourself, even if you can't sew properly. It's just nice that *you* know that *you* made it. You created it, it's your baby! You didn't get somebody – your girlfriend or your mum to sew 'em on for you. Or you didn't cheat you know glue 'em on or something. I'm like 'I'll have that!' [mimes ripping off a glued patch from another jacket].

T: Yeah, they come right off, don't they?

P: Yeah. Partly it seems that them not being sewn on too perfectly is a good thing as well. That can be part of the look of it as well.

P: Well, a lot of that kind of comes from the punk scene. More like the…'cause they sort of…more like the crust punk scene. I've seen a couple this weekend, you might have seen them, where there's a lot of patches but they're sewn on really loosely with dental floss, you seen that?

T: Yeah, or fishing line.

P: Yeah or fishing line, but dental floss is much better, it's a lot more sturdy and it doesn't fuck up…yeah, fishing line slips, dental floss doesn't, it's because of the wax. So once you've got it on and pulled it tight, that ain't going nowhere! But it became a look, because it had really wide-spaced white stitching.

T: Yeah.

P: So they looked like they were like 'Unhh!' slapped on like that. I've done these ones most…I cheat, I machined most of these, but I hand sewn a lot of the ones round the pockets. I had to hand sew 'em, so that I could keep the pockets working. So all those are hand stitched [indicates]. I've re-tailored this anyway. I've actually had this to pieces and fitted it to me.

T: What, the actual jacket, taken it apart?

P: Yeah, exactly. I've modified it out, so I've got press studs on it now, erm, snap-clips. So these are much better than buttons. Buttons get in the way, you can knock them and all that. These, click-click! Get it on. Click-click, off. And look, I've got adjusters on the back so I can have it in summer mode, where it's on if it's a t-shirt, and I can let it out in the winter, when I've got other stuff underneath it, it always fits.

T: So you wear a leather jacket underneath it?

P: No, I don't – I don't do leather, it's horrible, it's uncomfortable. Normally I'll have a hoody underneath it, or a bomber jacket. It looks different, people look at you like 'Why have you got a bomber jacket?' But you know, nothing'll do it. Leathers are just so fucking uncomfortable, they're stinking hot in summer and they're like really clangy round your neck, you know, and they let the cold in. I don't like leather jackets. I had one once and I just got so fucked off with it I just gave it my mate.

T: I guess it's from the bikers, isn't it, the leather jacket? So you'd see them wearing it over the top.

P: I've never been a biker. Obviously I was…when I was a teenager into metal, I wanted to ride a big bike. But I never went down that route. I've never been involved with any motorcycle organisations, so the only reason I'd ever wear a leather jacket underneath is if I actually wanted to wear a leather jacket. You know, I wouldn't do that as a fashion statement. I think that's…that's a bit fake isn't it? I wear what I want. With this and a hoody I'm fine. If it's raining, I'll put something over the top of it.

T: Earlier on before we were recording you were talking about South London and North London and all that sort of thing. Do you think there's something about locality that comes into how you make your jacket? Like where you're based or the kind of bands that are playing round, or not really?

P: Not really, no. It's a pretty universal thing. Um, I think it's probably world-wide. Let me think about it.

T: Do you think it's changed?

P: There's very, very little regional variation of the actual bands.

T: Do you think perhaps it's changed with the internet?

P: No. I think it's always been like that. If you look through galleries, there's websites which have got, you know, like patchjacketgallery.com or whatever, there's a lot of resources online. And showing jackets going back to the late '70s and, apart from…the only thing that's really changed over time has been…it used to be all light denim, and then it became

bleached denim and stonewashed denim. It kind of changed as jeans changed. You know, the whole double denim thing. As jeans changed, you know, as it's gone through phases of you know, stonewashed, indigo and bleached and all that, jackets went with it. That's about the only thing that's changed. In terms of locality, I think it's only the bands. There's no 'If you're from this area you've got to have a stud there'. You know, there's none of that bollocks! It's pretty universal. Well I mean, worldwide even, I've been to metal shows in America and seen pretty much the same sort of thing going on. Very little difference.

T: I'm just wondering whether in the '70s, '80s, you know, before the internet, maybe it was more about bands that played round your area?

P: Well, for a lot of that, if you didn't go and see the band, you couldn't get the patch.

T: Yeah, exactly.

P: You know, you could only buy that stuff online…[corrects himself] at shows. It was in what were head-shops and then became smoke-shops and you had those sorts of things. There were loads of those in the '80s which would sell you, you know, bongs, papers and erm martial arts stuff, and underground stuff that teenage boys really wanna get hold of. And a lot of them in the early '80s started selling metal shirts, right. So you'd have a few of those rare Judas Priest, Whitesnake, something like that. And then it sort of started selling, so they'd start…and this was a crucial point in metal, certainly in the UK, 'cause when those little shops in the back of the high street started selling studded belts, wristbands, and then suddenly, 'bout '82, '83 I think, maybe before that, I'll probably be proved wrong but I remember about '82 you could get stuff like that. You could buy, you know, your studdy stuff and your bullet belts, buy clip on studs to add to the jacket, and crucially, patches. They started selling them. (There

was a) tiny little shop down the back of a disused thing, run by some like Indian pensioner. He's just one individ…the guy I used to buy all my stuff from, it was an army surplus shop run by this guy – him and both of his staff were all World War 2 soldiers. This guy was really an imposing Sikh guy. He was something like 6' 4" in his seventies, freaky – I mean, he looked like he'd been through hell! On a walking stick, you go in there and he'd sell you army surplus, he'd sell you Dr. Martens and that and he'd say [mimic Indian accent] 'Patches?' and you'd say 'Oh, I want a Motorhead badge.' 'Oh, I have one from Bomber album, I have one from Ace of Spades', and he knew! He knew everything he had in there. And I kind of…I didn't question it at the time, but the more I dealt with that guy, like bought from his shop, I sort of realised, he actually knew what he was doing. He wasn't just reciting stock. He actually had an interest in it. This is an OAP! Running this shop, with these two older 'Old Sergeant Major' types in the back of the shop, drinking their cups of tea, polishing the grade 1 boots up to go in the window, and they're selling all this stuff, and if you wanted something, they're [mimics shop owner again] 'Ah, for you, you like this band Slayer? I have seen new product. Er, come, come..' And he took me to the office and showed me this photocopied catalogue that he'd got from the suppliers, 'Er, Slayer, for you – new album.' 'You can get me that patch?!' It was great.

And the more I went around London, and then as I got older and the more I hung out a lot, the more I realised that these shops were *everywhere*! These unsung heroes of the backstreets, you know? It was really, really good. You could buy all sorts of stuff. Basically, all the shops you used to see in Camden High Street before it got a bit too corporate, there was one of those in every town. You just had to find it. They were all there. And some of them ended up doing vinyl as well. There were some amazing shops around in the '80s. But you know, people just can't do that anymore, rent, whatever. It just…it ain't gonna happen. Everyone there is made too much money and then the internet's killed that so...Then on the other hand, the internet's killed it in another way because you know, go on to

eBay with two hundred quid and then wait a week for all this shit to turn up, and you are suddenly, instantly part of a scene and can pass for it if you can blag your way through. I don't like that.

T: Yeah. But there's a lot of people who are new to it who basically do that…

P: Yeah. But because it's so accessible now, it's like, it's like, they're running before they can walk. That sounds horribly elitist, but you know what I mean?

T: Well, yeah that's what…

P: You just got into metal six months ago and you started to get…and then you might buy one, or two and then you have three metal t-shirts, and you can choose your metal shirt, and then you might start a jacket. That's how you just sort of grow with it. If you can just go out, and just walk out of your house a week later, looking like you've been on it for twenty years, and then blag your way through it, then that's…I'm not saying it's a bad thing because you're obviously into it, but it's just overkill. It's nice when it grows with you. You know? I'm having difficulty trying to get me thoughts out me mouth…

T: Yeah, definitely. I've met quite a few people who've told me they've been into metal a long time – maybe twenty, twenty-five years – and either used to have a jacket, haven't got it anymore, or didn't have one but said 'Oh, now I wanted to get one', so they've put one together. I've met a few people, like you say, who've got a very covered jacket and they say 'Oh, I've only been making it for a year' or something, 'But I've been listening to these bands for twenty years' or something like that. So I wonder if the popularity of making jackets has risen again, perhaps?

P: Yeah. It's definitely come back up again. In the last, I dunno, probably seven or eight years. It's started shooting up again. There's always been the people who've always had 'em, and then…you know, it's like anything, any scene, even I suppose you could take it outside like sport or anything, there'll always be a hardcore of people who always do one thing. They'll always be there, that ten per cent that are always there, till death! And then you'll get rise and falls, rise and falls and people getting into it while it's fashionable and then getting out of it and all that. But you know, I mean something like this is quite a…let's say outside the context of where we are now, you know, walking down yer high street with that on…not always appropriate.

T: So you don't always wear it?

P: No. There's a time and a place for everything. And some people would shoot *me* down for saying that I don't wear this all the time. What's the point of wearing this all the time? I'm going to Primark to buy a pair of socks! You know, maybe popping in to the dentist. No, you know, you don't need it. It's not like I'm wearing it as a uniform. I'm wearing it when I'm at events or shows, pubs whatever, where it's appropriate to wear it. And if I'm somewhere where it's not appropriate to wear it, where I might upset people, especially something like family events, something like that, as an obvious example, you wouldn't wear this to your dad's funeral, would ya? Well, unless your dad was a metal-head. You know what I mean? You've got to kind of choose the context.

T: So you don't want to be antagonistic, I guess?

P: No, I like being antagonistic up to a point, but there comes a level where it's just pointless. I 'cause I don't like winding people up. And you can always tell when you're winding someone up. I'm quite moral like that, you know. I don't like upsetting people, unless I've got a reason to. So I'm

not gonna walk down the street going 'You flipping cunt!' What's the point in that? You look like an arsehole! You know? Or people cross the street and call the police. No, what's the point in that? I don't work like that. I like people to get on. So there are occasions where that would be completely inappropriate. So I don't. But yeah, when I'm going anywhere where it is appropriate to wear it, like most places I go. Make sense?

T: Yeah. No, definitely, yeah. It's interesting that some people seem to say 'yeah, I wear it all the time', other people say 'no, I wear it just to gigs' and everything in between really, so…

P: Yeah, so it's that dividing line really. So, if I'm popping down Tesco's, you wouldn't specifically put it on to go to Tesco's. If you was wearing it already, and 'oh, I need to go to Tesco's', I'd quite happily walk into Tesco's wearing it. But if I was getting up in the morning, first thing, 'ooh, I've got to go to Tesco's!' I wouldn't immediately grab the jacket, you know? I've got no problem wearing it if I've been somewhere, yeah that's fine, but it's context.

T: Yeah. We've kind of talked about this, but obviously like you say you've seen all the bands and, you know, there's your band on there as well, isn't there?

P: Of course! A bit of shameless self-promotion, why not?

T: So, is there anything that's not related to music on the jacket?

P: [thinks] Yeah. [indicates 'Vote Minge' pin badge on lapel]

T: What's that about?

P: It's a comedy band called Mundo Jazz, from Liverpool. Liverpool or Manchester. Really really stupid comedy band, they normally play Glastonbury, the little Fringe events like that. They've done Edinburgh Fringe as well, I think. And they just write ridiculous songs. Absolutely stupid fucking songs. And they, they like dealing the history. And they found out about this guy in the 1800s in the States who was running for a senator, called Minge. Which didn't mean anything rude then, 'cause it was just a surname. It didn't mean what it means now. They were like 'Ooh.' So they wrote a presidential election campaign song for him: [sings] 'Vote Minge! Vote Minge! Vote Mister Herman Minge! Vote Minge!' Like that. And it became a line of merchandise for the band. And out of all the stuff on the jacket, apart from the occasional 'Oh my god, where did you get that?', that gets the most attention, that tiny little one inch pin that says 'Vote Minge' and everyone goes 'Yeahhh!!' And I don't even have to explain it. It's just 'Yeah, that's funny!'

T: 'Cause they know what it is?

P: Well they've got no fucking clue what it is. As if I said 'Oh yeah, he was a politician in the 1800s, somewhere in America'…if you Google it, it is, it's real.
And that ahh [indicates another badge]…that's an in joke, I'm not going into that…Elvis – massive Elvis fan. Uhhh….obligatory joke badge: 'Why do you only call me when you're high?'

T: Yeah. That's Arctic Monkeys is it?

P: Hmmm?

T: Is that from Arctic Monkeys? Or is it that they took it from something else?

P: It might be. I've got no idea. See? I've just fallen into my own trap you see! I might possibly be wearing an Arctic Monkeys badge without knowing it!

T: Maybe, maybe.

P: Double-edged sword! That might actually be an Arctic Monkeys badge. I like the sentiment.

T: Alright. Well, we've taken a lot of your time so…

P: We can carry on if you want, I'm enjoying it.

T: Well, is there anything else that you'd want to say about it that we haven't covered? It's great to hear about the history of it, um, what you feel's important about putting together a jacket, perhaps representing a view of someone who's made it for a long time as opposed to some people we were talking about who've made them reasonably recently.

P: Well like I said this is my third one so it's reasonably recent in the grand scheme of things. Because it's a continuation, you know, this one did grow a lot quicker because I already had half the patches already so…from making other ones, and then…it got silly, you know, it got to the point where I'm like 'I've got a gap to fill…ah, I want a patch of that band…but I can't get it, I'm going to have to make it. Right, measure it up and I'll make the badge to that exact size to fit this hole. You know, I've done that a couple of times, um, just for continuity. I don't like gaps. I've got a few gaps. I've got room for about another four patches on here, and then I'm going to have to start going on the inside I think. Silly!

T: Would you go on the inside?

P: I dunno, but I've gone up on the collar now. But getting patches that small's quite…but you know, something that high up, that prominent, it's got to be a band I really like so I'm kind of limited…

T: Is that Toxic Holocaust?

P: Toxic Holocaust, yeah. I'm quite limited on that count, but…

T: What about, like, how far back does the practice of making battle jackets go, do you think?

P: What, within the rock and metal community?

T: Yeah, has it been…

P: Well it didn't really start, it sort of evolved. There was a sort of…it came out, it came out of the bikes, and then, as far as I know, I mean I haven't actually researched this a lot. I mean, obviously I've got an interest, but as far as I can trace it, it was a bike thing, and then more and more bands started doing patches because there were a lot of patch jackets turning up at shows, obviously, because of the bikes, and they're like 'Ooh, if we do a patch of our band, maybe they'll put it on their bike jackets!' And I think it kind of evolved through that. So it would be bike jackets with bands being added, and more and more people started doing it with more and more bands, and then the people that weren't on the bikes just started building jackets. Most of the ones I've seen from the '70s were either biro'd, painted or hand embroidered, 'cause you couldn't get badges. I mean you could get a few, but you had a limited selection. There's a guy walking around here who's got an original '70s cut-off.

T: I think we've met him maybe.

P: I think you probably have.

T: With the Status Quo embroidery on it?

P: Yeah, yeah, that's it.

T: He's called Steve I think. Yeah, we were talking to him yesterday.

P: There's another guy who's got a really, really light bleached-out one who's got Rush on the back, he's embroidered Rush on the bottom of it.

T: Oh, yeah.

P: He's walking around here somewhere. That as far as I know is an original '70s embroidery.

T: There's another guy who's got a lot of embroidery on it and I think his is pretty old. Everything's embroidered, the whole thing.

P: Yeah, I've forgotten his name, he works for erm, Planet Mosh, he's a reviewer, I've forgotten his name, erm yeah, it was erm, yeah, embroidery or drawn (?) and other crafts, before you could get, you know, enough patches, as I say you'd have to draw it on yourself or…like I did. I wanted a massive Celtic Frost thing, and you couldn't get any Celtic Frost merch at that point, so I just fucking embroidered it. I thought, 'yeah, bam, done.' People went 'Wow!' yeah, I got a bit of kudos for that. Yeah, erm, as far as I know it just came through the bikes and then it got more and more band orientated rather than bike related, and then people started making band-only ones, and then it rocketed I suppose, around '79, '80. It really started taking off. Erm, if you look at…there's a Motorhead promo video, I think it's the one for Bomber, there's some shots of people at a Motorhead show with band-only cut-offs. So that's '79 ish. Well I suppose, it's just the

availability of patches on a large scale that kicked it off. I'm going to hazard a guess and say probably about '82, '83, it got big enough so that there was enough of a selection, and obviously they'd been around, but I think it was around then that they really started kicking off, you know with ready-made patches. And then the battle jackets went mental. And then Poison and Guns'N'Roses happened and it died off. And there was still that ten per cent, but you know, it stopped being a thing.

T: Yeah.

P: I mean, I've got a couple of jackets at home that I bought from car boot sales. 'Oh, clearing out the loft, oh it's me son's, oh he moved out when he went to university'…and I'm holding five hundred quid's worth of patches on an original battle jacket from 1981 sort of thing, they go 'Five pounds?' 'yeah!' I've picked up some incredibly rare patches like that. Just, you know, stuff that's been sewn on to something and it's just ended up being in a car boot or a jumble sale. I mean I've bought two battle jackets from jumble sales, I mean from boot sales, you know, fully populated. Really, really nice jackets. One of them I've still got. I'm loathe to take it apart. It's like a time capsule. It's beautiful. It's undamaged, all the badges, patches are pre-'83, amazing. A lot of the bands, you know, people wouldn't care about so much now, you know Rainbow and (inaudible), stuff like that, but you know, at the time, it was like a really cool jacket, with really cool current bands, and you know, I don't wanna take that one apart. I don't know whether to keep it, as it is, like a museum piece, or whether to sell it as it is, I don't know, but I kind of like having it, even though it wasn't mine.

T: Maybe you should hang it or…

P: Yeah, I've got it through 'legal' means, it's not as if it was confiscated or something like that. It was just a loft-find, and you know, the other one I

picked up I did strip down because it was really badly done. It did have a couple of really cool patches on it, so that one got stripped.
[Distortion sound from speakers]
'Thank you! Our next song!'
Um, yeah. There you go, that's about as far as I can go on that one. As I say, I've never really studied it, that's just what I know, remember and have picked up.

T: And the bikers started doing the patches in about the '40s didn't they? That's what I've looked at.

P: Yeah, well it came out of the USAF didn't it?

T: Yeah, after World War 2.

P: Yeah, rank badges and squad badges. The whole thing about, well I don't know much about it but what I know about the beginnings of the Hell's Angels, that was all army related, and presumably that's where the patch thing came from because they were like rank patches and insignia for various things. A sort of development from that.

T: Yeah, I think it was.

P: I don't know much about the history of it but as far as I know it kind of spread out from the army, military.

T: Well a lot of them were ex-military weren't they.

P: Yeah, and that's kind of where the insignia thing came from. So I suppose you can kind of trace it back to World War 2.

T: Well I think in a way it goes back to medieval heraldry.

P: Oh well, it does, but in terms of the development through bikes to metal, of what we're talking about now, the battle jacket, I'm going to say probably World War 2 because that's where it kicked off the sort of counter culture thing. It was inspired by that. So yeah, late '40s.

T: And you had the bomber crew jackets as well didn't you? With the nose cone artwork and the kill markings and all of that.

P: I've got loads of those – patches. I've got hundreds and hundreds of old military patches. Someone just gave them to me.

T: Really, wow. Well it sounds like a great collection.

P: Well it's not really a collection it's just a box of old military patches. I mean I've got to dig 'em out one day and do something with them.

T: Sounds like you could do an exhibition with them.

P: Maybe. There's nothing particularly rare. I did have someone look over them and he said 'No, there's nothing special in there'.

T: Oh really.

P: And I knew he was telling the truth 'cause he said 'There's nothing special in there' and he didn't say 'Tell you what, I'll give you twenty quid the lot!' If he'd said that, I'd have told him to fuck off 'cause I knew there was something he wanted. But he just said 'Nah mate, actually, it's just common…muck' So no, they're just sitting in a box, I'll probably do something with them one day. Just fly 'em on. I'm not really interested in the military side of it. I'm quite like anti-war so…

T: Yeah. Nice one. OK. Well, that's great.

P: How long we been? It's been an hour hasn't it?

T: Forty minutes. That'll take me long enough to type up!

P: It'll take you two hours to type up and six days to edit it!

T: Yeah! Alright, well I'll stop there.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Modern Heavy Metal Conference Interviews, Helsinki, Finland 5th – 8th June 2015

Emily

07.06.2015 13.30

Tom Cardwell: First of all could you talk about your jacket and the history of it? How long you've been making it, and then maybe talk about some of the bands and why you've chosen to put them on there.

Emily: I'm an artist, and as an artist I like to be a little bold sometimes, so, I decided that white would be a good option, because metal heads wear a lot of black, and I do wear a lot of black so…

T: White denim?

E: Yeah, I chose white denim because it's very contrasting to black. And when you go to a metal show it's like a sea of black, so I knew that white would stand out in the crowd, so that was the main reason why I picked white. It was basically just to be bold. I started it about a year ago, I had the idea as an artist, again, I wanted to stick with the theme of colour choices and that kind of thing, so I decided to go with a white, black and red theme. So I decided to go out and look for, or in the process of going to shows looked out for patches that were red or black combinations. The theme of the jacket was to be a thrash specific jacket. Of course I do have the Death patch on the back which is not exactly…it's death metal…but I couldn't find something else that I liked better.

T: Is this the first jacket you've made?

E: No, this is not the first jacket. The very first time I put patches on a jacket was when I was in the punk scene, back when I was late-teens/early twenties. And then I did that for a little while and then I kind of got away from it for a while, and then when I got more interested in metal again I kind of got obsessed with getting patches and making jackets, so I have several of them. This is my third one. And this particular vest I wanted to be very specific, very colour oriented and to stick out in the crowd.

T: So do you still have the others? Do you have them all and would wear them at different times?

E: Yes.

T: And do the others feature different genres or are they all kind of similar bands?

E: I have one that – I'm going to go back and re-work it – that I wanted to be more specifically Atlanta metal bands, so I started getting all their patches, and I started putting that together, but I do need to go back and revisit it because I added some other stuff that – doesn't make any sense.

T: It kind of diluted it?

E: Yeah, but that is the thing that I've learned about vests from other people, is that they tend to go back and rework it. Because there's always things that you can add or take off, that sort of thing. And the funny thing about having white that pertains to this conference, is that it's so easily damaged! I mean, I just wore it to Maryland Death Fest in Baltimore, a couple of weeks ago, and I wore it every day that I was there, so now, because it's white, there's all these marks on the back and underneath, and you know, you can see where I was sweating…it's like 'How can I

clean this vest?!'…it's going to be interesting. And then hear, I mean yesterday I got food on it, and I'm like 'How am I going to get this out?!', so now, if this doesn't come out, I will always have a memory of being here!

T: So maybe that's why metal fans tend to wear black!

E: yeah, because if you go and spill beer on your self at the show, and all this stuff…so yeah, white probably wasn't the best option!

T: But then you quite like that it kind of shows the wear and the history?

E: Yeah.

T: And then the red, black and white thing is quite strong in punk and hardcore, and then the crossover into black and white in death metal and black metal. But there's quite a heritage of that, going right back to early twentieth century, not talking only about music, but thinking about Russian constructivism, or even…

E: I think a lot about propaganda…

T: Yeah, propaganda posters, so that combination has long been…even medieval printing, you know the original woodblock printing, black and white that they might hand colour, with some red. So there's real strong symbolism to that I suppose, which I'm not necessarily saying you were thinking about all of that, but…

E: I wasn't really thinking about it, but now that you're talking about it, yes!

T: But it's nice to hear that you made that conscious decision to go for the three colours…

E: Well I think a lot of times, when you look at vests, people tend to go one way or the other. They either tend to put random patches, you know they're just all different colours and all different band genres and everything, or, they'll want to do something very specific like black with all white, or whatever, so it was hard to design this one, because the other one was more scattered, so I wanted to be more design-oriented with this one.

T: What's the oldest patch on there, do you know?

E: Probably…well this is the newest one…I just got this, Artillery, they just played in Atlanta, of course it's black, white and red so I had to get it!

T: So you got that at the show?

E: Yeah, I got that at the show. Sadly, I did not get this (indicates Sodom patch) at any show, and I was really sad that Sodom didn't play at Maryland Death Fest for the second year in a row. They were supposed to play last year, and then something happened with their Visas and they couldn't make it, and this yeah they were like 'We promise we'll be there' and then something happened last minute and they didn't make it.

T: Are they from Germany?

E: They're from Germany yeah. But my favourite patch is definitely the Nielsen from the Simpsons patch, because I actually got this at Dragon Con, which is a huge Comic and Sci Fi convention thing in Atlanta, it's a huge event. And you know in the process of making this vest I saw this and it had the red, and I said 'I've got to have that' you know to add a sense of humour to a very serious topic, which is metal, so….

T: So you're a comic fan as well?

E: Well I mean, the Simpsons is a show I grew up on, so that has some meaning to me, just a sort of nostalgic thing…

T: Was it maybe a nod as well to that kind of dumb image of metal like what…

E: Oh, Beavis and Butthead or whatever…

T: Yeah, who was talking about that?

E: Alex Skolnick. In some respects, yeah. I'm kind of playing on the humour of 'don't take things so seriously', cause metalheads do take things seriously. And I wanted to be like people could look at my vest and be like 'Oh, those patches are badass! But, oh my god that's hilarious!' Like, so people could lighten up a little bit, have a good time with it and not be so serious about it.

T: And what about the studs, because not everyone features studs do they?

E: Yeah, well that was the same thing. I just wanted something that contrasted on top of the white, and it was just a design aesthetic more than anything.

T: I suppose it also fits into thrash, you know, a lot of that original thrash look had studs and bullet belts, and things like that, so there's a kind of aggressiveness to it, in a visual sense.

E: Yeah. And then this pin I got in Washington DC actually.

T: The AK47?

E: Yeah, it's a military thing, a lot of military people they get certain pins for certain things and there was a stand and they had this and my dad is actually a colonel in the army who lived in Washington DC for a long time, so when I was there, or course I'm always looking for pins or patches that I think are interesting, and I just happened to be on the Mall in Washington DC and there was this war veteran guy selling pins, and I was like 'It's perfect for thrash' I mean, you think about thrash it's like che che che (percussive noise) you know, it's very fast and that was why.

T: Does it have some political resonance for you then, because obviously that would be a particular…the guy selling that would be very much supporting the military and that would be his stance. Would that be something you wanted to support?

E: No, that wasn't really, I mean, I was just going with the thrash theme. It was not political by any means.

T: have you had any comment on it in the States, because I know the whole gun debate's quite big isn't it?

E: Oh, the gun debate, yeah. Well no one really notices the gun.

T: Probably because of the context of the jacket…

E: Yeah, I don't think metalheads really think about stuff like that, especially at concerts, I think they're too drunk!

T: And what about non-metal people, no one's said anything?

E: No. But yeah, it is a big debate in the states, you know, gun laws and where you can take them, and should you even have them on you? And

there's people on the far left and the far right that are talking about that right now.

T: What about…this in a way is a simplistic question, in that we're all at a metal conference and most of us are fans so we already know what we think about this, but I think it's interesting to hear it because one view that I think a lot of non-metal fans would have about metal clothing and the imagery of the music is that it's very dark and aggressive and morbid or violent, and particularly some of the patches you've got, like Carcass and the Death patch…

E: (indicates patch artwork) And they're basically chopping…I guess they're like scalping him, yeah!

T: Yeah, so you've got some reasonably full-on imagery there and how do you feel about that as something…I guess I'm getting at that perception of how other people would see that imagery and…do you feel like you want to make an aggressive statement?

E: Yeah! Definitely. I think that people who are passionate about metal and get into metal like the feeling of empowerment, the feeling of power, the feeling of strength that the music gives them. And to be bold. To stand out from the crowd and say 'I'm comfortable with myself, I'm proud of who I am, I'm proud of my music, and I'm not afraid of what you think.' So having some, in some instances, violent imagery is basically saying 'I am not like you, and I am comfortable wearing this kind of stuff, and you might be offended by it but….'

T: But I'm also assuming that just because you're wearing that imagery that doesn't mean that you would be someone who would go and do those things?

E: Right, right. No, I'm not out to hurt people at all!

T: And probably that's true of most people who would wear a metal shirt but, again you know people might think differently. That's the common misconception, that the media….you know we were talking earlier about the media and moral panics and things…'Oh you know, these metal kids are going to kill everyone!' You know.

E: Yeah, well there was always that stigma and that stereotype, you know, people who don't really understand what's going on, so they throw their own assumptions on to what they think…you know, if someone's wearing a shirt with someone ripping someone's head off, you know they assume that 'oh, that person's going to kill someone' but that's not like what's really going on.

T: Do you think that's a misunderstanding of both the theatricality of metal, in that, within metal communities this isn't something we're talking about doing literally, but it's rather a depiction of the themes and values that metal's interested in, and that we all understand that disconnection. So by theatricality I don't mean a kind of fakeness, but perhaps there's an understanding that these things are dealt with as a fiction, with reference to reality, but not…you know.

E: Basically I think metal music and certain bands tend to touch upon things that most people are uncomfortable talking about. Like violence, or certain things that happen in the world. They tend to bring focus to topics that are un-discussed, things that people are afraid of talking about basically. But then again, you know, there are metal bands that talk about completely other things, so it's really a wide range. There's so many different genres of metal and so many different topics that people talk about. I think a lot of people that don't listen to metal don't realize that.

T: Do you think also there's an element of it being a bit like a kind of shibboleth? Like a test? Like, 'can you get this?' So it's the metal community self-selecting, in a way.

E: Yes. Absolutely, and I actually talked about this in my thesis paper, about how because metalheads are outsiders from popular culture and the mainstream and all that, because we choose to be that way, to become part of this underground community of people, you tend to exclude the mainstream from your insider…I call it outsider/insider because you're an outsider but you're inside of this outsider culture. So yes, I do think that metalheads like to wear their vests because it gives you the opportunity to meet other metalheads because someone can see you from down the street and say 'Oh I love that patch, I want to talk to that person', because you have that connection, whereas everyone else walking around the city is not going to understand.

T: And you're willing to display this imagery which some people wouldn't understand why you would, but if someone understands it then you've maybe got some common ground with them?

E: Yeah, it opens up the conversation.

T: In that sense, perhaps, maybe that's why metal imagery in some ways has become, at least in certain genres, becomes more and more extreme, you know, because, as we were talking about earlier, if you can have an Iron Maiden shirt or a Slayer shirt in H&M, or in Topshop, it's become mainstream, to a certain extent, maybe not literally the music but the imagery has been assimilated…

E: It's been around long enough to be assimilated, yeah.

T: …the people in Topshop buy it so maybe edgier bands, you know, maybe black and death metal bands…

E: Especially black metal and death metal bands!

T:…might then push the imagery further because they want…they say 'OK, if everyone else is comfortable with that we need something more…'

E: I think that's, I wouldn't say the problem, but maybe the issue is that metal has always been an extreme…so now that it's been around for like forty-plus years, it's become more mainstream so I think that all these bands are trying to find a way to make it…to keep pushing the envelope, because how far can you take it? What more can you do to keep that extreme…and I'd say that definitely death metal and black metal are the two genres that keep trying to come up with new ways to make it more extreme.

T: So maybe that's always going to continue in some way. So again we were talking earlier about your perspective, being female in the metal scene. Maybe you could talk about that in relation to the jacket and how that affects what the jacket means to you.

E: So being a female, like I said before, is always tricky in the everyday, but also in the metal scene because it is male dominated, but I think, well this is kind of like an off-beat thing from that, but being a female, you're almost always having to carry a purse…you're always having to carry all these things, like a wallet, a phone, sunglasses, lipstick, like, whatever, and to be honest sometimes I get really annoyed at having to carry all this stuff. So I love having a vest because I can fit all these things into it, so it really frees me up from having to carry all of it, and that's amazing. But secondly, talking about the masculine code that Deena (Weinstein) writes about, I think that going to metal shows, I try not to dress too scantily clad,

I mean, I wouldn't choose to do that all the time anyway, but I think it reinforces the masculine code, like going to shows, wearing the same thing as a guy will make you more readily accepted and it also can open up discussion, conversation where you feel like male or female, you're all the same, and you can basically just talk about metal, and that's all there is to it. Rather than the fact that we're gendered. So I think that it does reinforce the equality between men and women, at least for me. I enjoy wearing it. Because it's a battle vest right? So it's supposed to be about honour and strength and power and passion and creativity, which are all things that I care about so…

T: Do you think there's any ways in which you've adapted it to be more like a feminine version?

E: No, no. I don't think there's any feminine traits really, apart from being white, maybe.

T: Yeah, I haven't seen many white vests but I don't know if that's a gendered thing.

E: Yeah, you don't see a lot of white vests. There's one guy friend of mine who has one, and I've seen a couple of red ones...I like to be a little bit different, I want to stand out and wear white!

T: Have you been into metal your whole life?

E: Pretty much. I knew what it was (when I was younger), only from watching MTV. I saw hair metal and all of that, so I knew what it was, but I didn't really understand that much about music back then. When I was about 13 or 14 I dated a musician who was older than me who got me into punk and got me into metal, and that was the first time I ever really listened to Metallica. I think the 'Master of Puppets' album was the one

that I got first. And as soon as I listened to it, it was like something just hit me at my core, and I connected so immediately with it, and I had never felt that with any other music. So I knew immediately that something was very powerful about this album, this music, so then I started to discover more, as a teenager, because I was an angry teenager, I was an outcast, I was an outsider. I had friends, but I wasn't in the popular crowd. I think I got more into metal because of my lifestyle and being a teenager.

T: Do you think everyone who's into metal in some way identifies as an outsider to the mainstream?

E: Well, I've interviewed a lot of people and I've talked to a *lot* of metalheads, just in the process of my thesis, and I think that pretty much every single person I've talked to got into metal because they were - typically, in my survey that I did, the median age was 13 or 14 years old – when they discovered it and got into it. So it is around that age when you're struggling with life. You're trying to figure out your own identity – 'who am I?', 'where am I going?', 'I'm struggling with being a child, I don't want to be an adult' So there's all these balances that you're trying to figure out, so metal is a great escape, and it becomes a great friend for a lot of people. So yes, I would say that pretty much everyone I've ever met had that same situation.

T: And maybe that's why there's been a lot of talk this week about why when metal – one band that's been mentioned a lot is Metallica – become mainstream, people have a problem. When people who might be considered mainstream say 'Oh, we'll have that music', maybe that's what we don't like.

E: Yeah, I think that's where that whole debate about being 'trve', which is such a confusing thing, and I wish someone would write or do research about it, because how do you really define who's 'trve'? Is it because you

got into it when you were a kid? What if you discovered it when you were 20 or 30 and then you fell in love with it? I mean it doesn't really matter how old you are. I don't know, I don't really have a good answer for that, but I think it is difficult for someone who is passionate about metal to see someone who maybe hasn't struggled, hasn't been a outsider, maybe doesn't have that connection to it, and you might want to question why? Like, 'Why would you even be into this music?' You're not connecting to something in it, I don't know.

T: Maybe there's that suspicion that it's just something that's trendy for a while, that you perceive it as being the thing to be into now so now you want to know about it, but you never did…

E: Well certainly that's the thing about the outsider/insider culture, because once you find other people who share your values and your passions and your music, you don't want other people just coming in who know nothing about it, and who are maybe trendy or maybe, you know, I think metalheads most particularly over any other genre of music are most defensive about their music, they don't want…they're very protective over it, more than any other genre of music that I've ever seen.

T: I was going to ask you about when you would wear the vests? Are they something that you would wear day-in, day-out, or do you wear them more to shows and not other times, or how does it work?

E: I would say, I definitely wear them during the day, and I used to love wearing them to class, because none of my fellow students were metalheads but they all accepted me and we were all very close friends but we were all very different, so I wore them to school all the time, but definitely I would say more to shows than anything, because, again, I don't want to carry a purse, and I want to represent myself and be myself and

maybe open up conversations or whatever, so that would be the one place I'd probably wear them the most.

T: To ask the opposite, would there be any situations in your life where you'd feel uncomfortable wearing them?

E: Yes. I would say with my family. Not that I couldn't, like I don't tend to wear the really crazy metal shirts around them, I might wear one or two, but I tend to dress slightly more…like, I still wear a lot of black. My niece was like 'Aunt Emily, do you have anything in your closet that's not black?!' I mean, so they all know that I'm weird, and they all make fun of my hair. When I visit my dad, they have this running bet, like 'What colour's her hair going to be this time?' So I show up and it's like either red or blue, and whoever gets the right colour gets a Snickers bar. But I don't really wear this kind of stuff around them as much, particularly the young kids, because I don't want to freak out my family too terribly. I mean, they know that I'm weird but I tend to dress more in just like solid black or whatever when I'm around them.

T: So would you not have worn so much metal stuff when you lived at home, when you were younger?

E: Well I went to private school, so I wasn't *allowed* to wear it. Which I think also contributed to me kind of going the other way as soon as I graduated from school. I mean, I shaved my head, I had a Mohawk, you know, I went the exact opposite because I was never allowed to wear anything creative, although I did get away with wearing a studded bracelet and Dr Martens which neither of those were allowed, but because I was a good student and the professors liked me I got away with it. After school, a little bit yeah, but not during school.

T: In a way I suppose that the visual aspect of metal, like the rest of it, thrives on things that you are not allowed to do, like a pushing of the boundaries. Hence we were talking about the imagery being provocative etc.

Is there anything else you haven't mentioned that you'd want to say about the jacket?

E: No, I mean, I just found bands that I like. I'm representing, I have to have at least one Atlanta band when I'm travelling. I wore a (band name unclear) shirt the other day as well…so I really try to support my local community with everything that I wear.

T: What I was going to ask you was with the Death patch – the back patch – did you choose that because they're one of your favourite bands, or was it more that you liked that image?

E: I really like Death! And I do like the 'Human' album, and I was looking online, I was looking at different Death patches basically, I was looking for a Death back patch that I really wanted. And I looked online for a while and they had two different 'Human' back patches, but this one had – again it was a contrast thing, where the white stood out against the black –

T: It's kind of shaped, did you shape it?

E: Yeah I did! So I cut it, because it was really big.

T: And you've done something to the edge…

E: Yeah, that was because I washed the vest, and it fucked up the patch, so I'm an idiot and I shouldn't have washed it, but yeah, it's white so I was probably drunk or something and I washed it. And it came out and the

edges were just like shredded, with like stuff coming off. So I put gaffer's tape, because I'm a photographer, so I've got gaffer's tape, which kind of like reinforced the edges. And I think I used red thread, for the contrast.

T: And I assume you sewed it all yourself?

E: Oh yeah! Nobody ever does anything for me! Got to do it myself. As an artist, everything I do, it's like my hands have to touch it.

T: So it's quite a creative process, making the vest?

E: Yeah, there was a lot of planning involved.

T: And do you think there's an element with this sort of thing where you don't want it to be too perfect, you know the DIY thing? That kind of punk thing? Visible stitching, not like machine stitching?

E: Yeah definitely, I think with both punk and metal…I wouldn't want to go to a mall and buy a vest that had been pre-made, with loads of patches on it and stuff. I mean, what's the meaning? What's the meaning behind that? This has meaning.

T: So that idea of authenticity in the selection of the patches is very important?

E: Yeah.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDES

Nick and Jenna

08.06.2015 18.15

Tom Cardwell: What do you guys do?

Jenna: I'm a grad student, by morning! And then I work part-time, but mostly I guess I'm a grad student in Sociology.

T: You gave a paper at the conference this week, what was the title?

J: The title was 'Lipstick and Leather: Recontextualisations of Glam Metal Style and Signification'.

T: Nick, you're not an academic?

Nick: I am not an academic! I've never been to university. I'm a truck driver, and have been for twelve years.

T: That's some good metal credentials right there!

N: That's right. You name it, I've hauled it. I've also delivered concert material. I've delivered sound stages and lighting to our local stadium. I've met roadies, road crews. I've never had the opportunity to get any signatures, the band's never there in daylight, but that's the service end of things for you!

T: So, we've been talking a bit about your jackets this week, when did you both – have you had your vests a long time or…?

J: Well I've had a vest ever since I started – since I joined the scene – well that sounds funny, but since I started listening to the music and going to

concerts, that'd probably be 2008/2009, and then I've had different variations of vests. So I had a vest that I was working on for a while and then I was at a show and I lost it in Red Deer, like I forgot it behind at the hotel or something, so since then I've had another vest, this is my most recent vest, that you just took a picture of, that I just sewed in the last week! So I've just had different variations, different patches, that kind of stuff.

N: I started my vest about six and a half years ago, just before I met Jenna. I'd been a fan of metal since I was fifteen, I'm thirty now. Concert t-shirts was my thing before that. I was always envious of people with cool vests, so I just cut the sleeves off an old jean jacket, and it just started with ironing on my first Exodus patch from one of the shows, and it just kind of took off from there.

T: Is this the original jacket?

N: This is the original jacket yes. I actually owned the jean jacket for about ten (years), and ironing on the Exodus patch came from covering a cigarette burn in the beginning, and it just kind of grew from there.

T: So it's quite organic?

N: It is, yeah.

T: And was there a point at which you thought 'Right, I'm going to get a load more patches to fill it up', or did you just put one by one as you got them?

N: I actually started collecting patches when I was 16 or 17, from our local rock shop, and just never had the ambition…I just never really wanted to butcher a jacket, so to speak, at that point, but having a collection of them

kind of got it started, and yeah, that's about it really. So from there, every show we go to, if I like the band I buy the patch, you put it on the jacket.

T: Did you buy any patches yesterday?

N: I did, I bought a Lost Society patch, at their show, and I found…did I buy a patch at the rock shop? I didn't buy a patch at the rock shop! No, but I wanted to! Instead I bought a Kreator t-shirt!

T: What are the prices like here (compared to Canada)? Because to me, it seems like things are quite expensive here.

J: Well it's not…the rock shop we went to, it was about three Euros per patch, that's actually really good because at home, they price based on size, so the longer patches, or the taller ones are about eight dollars Canadian which, I mean, Euros, I don't know what that would be…

N: Probably about five Euros so…

J: So I notice it's a little bit cheaper here but that's…I bought about five patches and they were three Euros each and she told me the total and I thought it was cheap so…

T: In terms of the bands you've featured, how do they get chosen?

J: Mostly it's like bands that I listen to or that I've *listened* to, in the past. For me, it's always been that when I transition from one vest to another, like when I lost my first vest, I didn't even want to wear my second vest because I really wanted a Kreator backpatch, and I couldn't find that Kreator backpatch that I had again. So I didn't even wear it until a couple of friends bought me that Kreator backpatch for my birthday one year, they found it finally…

T: So that's the same backpatch as you had on the vest you lost?

J: Yeah, but when I lost the first vest I lost the backpatch, and it was even like…for a lot of people with the backpatch it's either like that's the first metal band you started listening to, or that's the band that you like the most. For me that was the first thrash metal band that I really got into, so for me it was really important, so I didn't want to wear another vest without another backpatch that was meaningful. I thought about getting a different band but it wasn't the same.

T: Would you feel like you've got to put the backpatch on first, was that like the cornerstone of the jacket?

J: Not that I had to put the backpatch on first, but I couldn't wear it without the backpatch. Like, I had other patches on it, but I couldn't really wear it. I could work on it, but I couldn't wear it. It's like an identity thing. And it's so strategic the way that it's a backpatch, and everybody has a story behind their backpatch, you have to kind of play along with that, so…

T: What do you mean by 'play along with it'?

J: Well you really internalize the style of it, and the sense that everybody has that everybody has to have a backpatch that means something. When I lost my backpatch I was like really…

N: You were devastated!

J: Yeah, I was like 'I can't move on, unless I get that patch! Or unless I get another patch…' and I really didn't know, for me, the only time that I would ever change that would be if I could get another patch that would be equally as important. And the only other band that would do that for me is

Manowar, so…but I can't buy a Manowar backpatch because they're so expensive, and they only ship them out of their website so…but it's ok, because I like Kreator equally as much but…Yeah, it's just something that I think fans internalize in their style, something that they have to show that their backpatch is a sense of who they are more than anything.

N: I never had a problem wearing my vest before it had a backpatch. Referring to price in size, it came down to finally biting the bullet, on paying for the backpatch. In addition, it came down to finding Iron Maiden's first album cover as a backpatch. I mean, I've got 'Fear of the Dark' tattooed on my leg! Before I even had an Iron Maiden patch on my vest! And 'Fear of the Dark' was the first Maiden patch that made it's way onto my vest. I actually wanted to theme a jacket on Iron Maiden, with as many Maiden patches as I could find. And it's still a goal. But at present I do believe I have, if we count, I've got four regular patches and the backpatch. So I've got five Maiden patches on this vest, there's a couple of doubles along the way, I've also got two 3 Inches of Blood patches on here. They're a Canadian band, that really haul, and I really like 'em, and they're calling it quits in November which is really sad but they announced it to the world earlier in the year, sold out their show in a day!

T: I bet that's why they did it!

N: Yeah, but I never had a problem wearing my vest without the backpatch, and every patch on here, with the exception of my country flags, are bands that I've seen, played with, opened for, and enjoyed. Always. I've never seen W.A.S.P, but I love them. Other than that, everything else that you see on here, I've seen the band.

T: And do you try to get the patch at the show?

N: I really do try and buy the patch at the show. Sometimes there a little overpriced at merch booth, but they're cheaper than a t-shirt! Wristbands too, I've got a pretty impressive collection of wristbands at home.

T: Useful for a drummer right?

N: Absolutely! And in my industry I wear long sleeve shirts, and they always lift up, so I like having my wrists covered for you know, wintertime, for cold weather, to bridge the gap. But as far as being a drummer goes, they're really useful. I wear them when I play, even in the basement, if I'm practicing at home, I put a wristband on, both hands.

T: Would you ever wear the vest when you're playing, or is it too hot?

N: I've started off shows with the vest on, usually end up shirtless! Yeah, it gets pretty warm, I'm putting out a lot of energy. Stage lights is hot! Even playing in my basement is hot. When you all get going, all gelled and jamming!

J: I don't think I've seen many people…I don't think I've been to a show where I've seen people wear a vest (on stage).

T: Some people do, I've seen it a few times, but you're right, not all that often.

N: In a moshpit my vest is crucial. It acts as protection. For keeping your stuff in. And usually the youngsters like to have spiked bracelets these days. Certain venues do, certain venues don't ban them. And when you get hit by someone cross-armed, you could be in for a pretty nasty bruise or two.

J: That's actually a good point because now when we go to shows it's actually nice to have my vest now that I have it, because at least for women's clothing there's not a lot of pockets, so I don't have to bring a bag or something, so that's always nice but anyway.

N: Or you just ask me to put your stuff in my pocket! I've broken a couple of drivers' licenses along the way, having just my ID and bank card in my pocket, you know. You get them out at the end of the night and they're kind of split in half? That means it was a good night!

T: Your jacket, Jenna, you've got the yellow stitching on it.

J: Yeah, I just made that decision. I don't know, I try…well I wear so much black I was like, 'I'm going to try and be original!' I don't know if it's really original but it's a way of trying to be original, because I've never seen that before. I just did that two weeks ago. It was just that sort of thing. I wasn't going to because I was afraid of how it would look, but then…

T: And you've got a kind of unusual jacket haven't you, the vest itself?

J: Yeah, it's a black leopard print vest that I spent way too much money on at Hot Topic in the US.

T: What's Hot Topic?

J: It's a clothing chain that sells music t-shirts and stuff like that. I've always, like for myself I've never…I don't wear blue jeans, so I've always had to have either a black vest, which are really hard to find, no matter how many thrift stores you go to, so when I found that black leopard print vest that was like…I guess that was my way of incorporating some type of layer into the vest so that It's not just a plain black vest.

T: Is it perhaps a little bit of a nod to the glam metal?

J: Maybe! That and I just like leopard print, but yes. I don't know. I'm not a huge fan of glam metal, I like it. I think it's….I like it, but it's not my first choice. I do like it. But like, my thing with my studies is that I really like the *style* of glam metal. Because I think that the style of glam metal has helped to progress style within heavy metal in general, so that's why I like that type of style.

T: Nick, you've got something different on your vest there, your little dog tag.

N: Ah, it's in memory of my best good buddy. I had him for twelve years. And the tag was personalized, I made it at a pet store for like, two dollars. The dog's name was Cooter. And it says 'I am the Dude AKA Cooter. Don't fuck with me. Thanks, eh!' I mean he was a big scary dog, he was 120 pounds, a Great Pyrenees/St Bernard cross and he actually used to wear this vest when I'd take him for a walk sometimes, in cold weather! If it got too cold, if it was like -40 out, he'd go diving into a snow bank, and he'd start getting ice in his fur, you could tell that he'd get cold, he'd start to shiver a bit, so I'd bring my vest and put it on him. Button it up on his chest and put his front arms through the arm holes and he'd be a happy, happy boy!

T: Wow, so your vest has many functions!

N: Absolutely! It doubles as a pillow sometimes!

T: I don't think I've ever met someone who's used it for their dog.

N: Well I'm a pet lover so…

T: Do you have another dog now?

N: Not now, but we've got a mean, mean cat named Zeus! And he is definitely just like the god of lightning! He's fast, he's furious, and he will kill you! He actually put me in the clinic once when he bit my leg!

J: Right through the Eddy tattoo!

N: I was more angry about him biting through my Eddy tattoo than anything else!

T: Do you guys have friends who also wear vests?

N: Absolutely yes.

J: I think all of my friends that go to shows…I think they all do. I do have friends, one friend actually, who doesn't have a vest, but she sews patches on black hoodies. Just backpatches. I have other friends that have leather jackets that they sew…pretty much everybody that I know does something with patches.

T: And would you discuss each other's vests and talk about it?

J: Oh yeah! Like you see…even if you don't know somebody you go up to them and you're like 'Oh my god, sweet patch!' Like I was with your Alestorm patch, I love that! Just, unique bands, or if you're looking at someone's vest and you haven't heard a band, it's like an advertising thing. Like what Scott Ian was talking about. Back then you'd have no advertising so you just looked at people's shirts, and I think that is still the case with vests and t-shirts.

N: The 'analog' way of sharing music!

T: Yeah. It sounds like from what you're saying that people are generally quite positive to each other – do you feel like anyone's ever been critical of what someone else would wear? Have you ever experienced that?

N: In our country not so much…

J: Not of a vest. With t-shirts, I've noticed, at least with women fans, like my friends, women heavy metal fans in Calgary I've noticed can be critical. Like I was telling you – we went to a folk metal show a couple of weeks ago, and someone came in wearing an AC/DC t-shirt, and my friend just looked at me like 'Why would you wear an AC/DC shirt? Like first of all AC/DC sucks, and second of all we're at a folk metal show!' Like it's very calculated what you wear, and there are certain shows I would probably go to where I wouldn't wear a vest.

T: But generally people are quite friendly about it?

N: Absolutely! In my industry I can literally deal with 200 people a day, going from different warehouses or stores or wherever, there are 'unexpected metalheads' everywhere. And I get a lot of positive reactions from my customers. Because corporate America dictates that they can't wear their own personal stuff for work, they have to wear their uniform. And they all say stuff to me like 'Aww, I wish I could wear my Slayer shirt to work!' of 'I wish I could wear *my* vest to work!' And a lot of these people I meet in my day-to-day life, we run into at a show, and the social networking just sprawls!

J: Because they see your vest and they recognize you.

T: So it's like an identification thing.

N: Absolutely.

T: Do you interact with people about it online at all? Would you put stuff on a forum? Have you seen the jacket forums and things like that?

J: I haven't seen jacket forums. I do look for patches online. I haven't really bought any online, except for one patch that I bought for Nick…

N: Which didn't make it on the vest!

J: I didn't know that people…maybe I should check it out!

T: Yeah, well there's forums where people post up their jackets and discuss them with each other…it's kind of interesting, but I wouldn't say you need to do it.