

## **Retro Rock & Heavy History**

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Since the past occupies me as if it were the present, and the present seems to me infinitely far away, for these reasons I cannot separate the future from the past as sharply as is usually done.  
(Hesse in Lachman. 2009 p. 126)

Heavy metal is a progressive genre, with a long, tangential and complex development.

This development has been the topic of much critical, academic and fan debate and yet it is a genre marked by a consistent musical and ideological practice of return and revision. The ‘evolution’ of heavy metal, notable by the growth, fracture and splintering over time into myriad subgenres - the multiplicity of successive and concurrent ‘metals’ - masks retro-progressive engagements with heavy metal histories, with retrospective fan and musician practices, with its relationships with past classics and canons, failures and fads. Whilst heavy metal has not entirely escaped the perceived cultural, and specifically musical, collapse into perpetual nostalgia, described by Simon Reynolds<sup>1</sup> as ‘retro-rock leeching off ancient styles’ (2011: 1), the genre’s continuous development and consistent and deferential relationship with its own past has meant that it has not succumbed to mere nostalgic pastiche in the way that Reynolds suggests, but continues to investigate, construct and deconstruct its own pasts and “origins”.

In this sense, heavy metal’s nostalgias are nostalgias in the name of progress. They are peculiarly bohemian nostalgias that drive heavy metal forward through engagements with possible “pasts”. ‘[B]ohemia is always yesterday’ (Cowley in Wilson, 1999: 14) and, as such, the past is constructed and narrated, as both more authentic and therefore more bohemian than the present. It is also, at least in part, through these bohemian retrospections, as with previous bohemian cultures, at odds with mainstream or mass cultural production. As such, heavy metal’s development

seems far from 'obvious and well coded' (Fabbri. 1981: 4) and also, as a series of stories, analyses and narratives, arguably important 'given the longevity of heavy metal's appeal in a sphere of popular culture notable for fads and fashions' (Bennett 2001: 42).

### **The Problem of Heavy History**

The past has gone and history is what historians make of it when they go to work. (Jenkins. 1991, p.6)

The progressive narrative of heavy metal is often depicted in linear family tree models such as those created by Pete Frame in the nineteen seventies for the British music press (ref) and subsequently used by the BBC in the mid nineteen nineties in the 'Rock Family Tree' television series, or again by Sam Dunn as a map to guide viewers through the *Metal Evolution* (2011) television series. In this graphic model, a point of origin is presented at the head of the map and then followed by the familial-spawned new branches of the genre, which in turn is followed by the next unfolding linear musical generations beneath it, and so on. This linear narrative of generations that spawn new generations belies both the complexity of the development of heavy metal, and the lack of a specific agreed point of origin. As Deena Weinstein (2000) suggests 'Heavy Metal has many histories. There is no consensus on its precursors, basic influences, first full-fledged songs and bands, or developmental stages' (p.14) and yet there is also the persistent notion that 'the family begins with Black Sabbath' (Frimodt-Moller 2013: 81).

With no agreed origin, only suggestions of pre-metal, proto-metal or early metal leading up to heavy metal itself, building a linear history is problematic; to whom can we attribute the genetic code of the genre? And beyond this complex problem of historical origin, there are further historiographical problems. How, for instance, do we locate bands such as Pentagram, whose early unreleased or marginalized work has been reissued into the contemporary metal sphere in multiple volumes? Pentagram, a (now) highly influential band that formed in the early nineteen seventies but whose multiple line ups, name and location changes meant that their 'debut' album only saw the light of day in incremental stages - a CD demo in 1982; self-released vinyl in 1985, followed by an official release almost a decade later (Peaceville records 1993) - are problematic to heavy metal histories. Where, given their relatively recent growth in stature, should they be placed in such a linear, generational model of generic development? At their point of formation, valorization, or canonization? To write – or over write – them into an already existent linear history of heavy metal development in the nineteen seventies alongside historically anchored acts such as Black Sabbath, would be problematic, as would writing them into existence only in the nineteen eighties or nineties. Although their prolific song-writing and demo recording meant that a small number of metal heads were able to hear Pentagram material through the late seventies and early eighties<sup>2</sup>, their entry into a broader journalistic and fan discourse of heavy metal and subsequent influence happened much later and continues to grow with each issue, reissue, documentary and article. It is now impossible to imagine heavy metal history without acts such as Pentagram. Not in the sense of the weight of influence or subjective critical worth of their contribution to the broad or niche musical culture, rather in the sense that now they occupy a place in the cultural memory of heavy metal; they, and the substantive history, line up changes,

stories and demos accumulated before their debut release, *cannot be unimagined*.

They are part of heavy metal memory, a memory that is ascribed by the culture rather than prescribed to the culture.

[C]ultural memory signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one [...] cultural memorization as an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future (Bal 1999: vii).

The collective writing and memorization into genre history of Pentagram, or any other previously marginalized heavy metal act, by fans, musicians and journalists, or the fading from memory of other once musically influential acts such as Vanilla Fudge, suggests a different way of approaching the story, development, past and present of heavy metal as both fluid and *non* linear. An approach that is not concerned with creating a methodology to irrefutably identify the chronological key points of a singular becoming of heavy metal, or uncovering the archaeological site of its birth, but one that celebrates the multiplicity, the overlapping, argumentative, impossibility of the heavy metal narrative. Here, I propose three ways that may facilitate the imagining of the genre's relationship with its own, and other equally complex pasts. Firstly, the idea that heavy metal history might be explored as a complex, multilayered model – as a palimpsest (as discussed by Dillon 2007) – rather than a linear, orderly and sequential map. Secondly, the notion that the lack of agreed origins of the genre mean that, within this bottomless narrative web, there are multiple available histories, routes to and roots from points of influence that continue the progression and development of the genre. They do so through facilitating the exploration that these rhizomatic trails present, rather than being stifled through the complexity and multiplicity of narrative webs. And thirdly, that a genealogical approach to this genre without origin – genealogical in the sense that Foucault (1977),

via Nietzsche (1996) explores it – is part of the story of the genre; that is, it is what fans and musicians have practiced through the decades of the genre’s shifting development in spite of historical, journalistic and academic attempts to fix a definitive narrative where ‘[t]he history of a musical movement is often told as a series of dramatic beginnings, when disparate musical and social trends come together in a creative fusion. These moments are usually mythologized and are often established well after the fact’ (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011: 31). These moments also, as evidenced in Deena Weinstein’s (2013) recent article on the naming of the genre, create false information – demonstrated through the perpetual citation of Burroughs’ use of ‘heavy metal’ in *Naked Lunch* (year) rather than the *Nova Trilogy*<sup>3</sup> – rumor and myth (often perpetuated by bands themselves that they were the ones the term was first applied to) that then, once published, are repeatedly presented as truth, as a mythical origin, cited by journalists and academics alike (Walser 1993: 8).

### **The Heavy Palimpsest**

If these linear historical narratives cannot accommodate the ways in which the heavy metal community approached and continues to approach the genre, how can its generic development be explained or imagined? Rather than a linear heavy metal history with discreet, near biblical, unfolding of neat generations and layers, the stories of heavy metal can be read as a memorative palimpsest – a multi-layered writing over writing, memory over memory, practice over practice – a complex web of overlapping, competing and contradictory stories. As Dillon (2007) defines it, ‘The palimpsest is a space in which two or more texts, often different and incongruous, coexist in a state of both collision and collusion’ (p.52). The palimpsest is thus a fittingly appropriate metaphor for heavy metal’s genealogy: allowing multiple

understandings of multiple histories, as well as differing genre origins, competing or complimentary understandings of the present and of the past. It also allows for differing depths of reading; for example, the emboldening of particular proto-metal styles and privileged influences within the cultural memories of subsets of the heavy metal community. Of course, with the slow emergence of heavy metal as generically definable - given that *Nova Express* was published in 1964 and a general consensus that 'one cannot talk about metal as a genre before 1970' (Waksman 2009: 10) - the initial texts of heavy metal were not recorded as heavy metal history per se, but rather within a popular cultural history and critical discourse of rock and pop. And as much as the phrase 'heavy metal' exists in popular cultural discourse in this pre-metal decade, its imagining as a genre label relies on more contemporary imagining: the phrase 'heavy metal' predates the music 'heavy metal' and yet the music 'heavy metal' predates the genre label 'heavy metal'. As such, various pre-metal and non-metal musical forms and artists as well as technological, ideological or broader cultural references may well feature in other colluding palimpsestic narratives: narratives of film, politics, of youth culture, fiction and fashion. These narratives are both fundamental and/or unimportant in the development of these oxidizations and contribute to differing and multiple metal memories. As Andrew Weiner (1974) suggested in an exploration of Black Sabbath's and heavy metal's popularity: 'Earth became Black Sabbath at the tail-end of a fairly spectacular boom in the black magic business. Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*, itself based upon a best-selling creepo-creapo novel. *Exposés in the News of the World*, full frontal nudie witches in the television night. *Thrills for a jaded nation*' (1974: 17). These are the 'different and incongruous' tales exposed in the appearance of the heavy metal palimpsest awaiting the curious heavy metal reader.

Palimpsests are both actual and figurative texts. They, as historical documents, date back to the third century BC (Dillon 2007), usually vellum, parchment, or in early cases, papyrus, where the original text was, due to the scarcity of writing material, erased so that new texts could be inscribed on their surfaces. Unlike other textual recycling, such as the reuse of old vinyl in new record production, this erasure was not wholly successful and the original writing, through the process of oxidization would, over time, reappear through the subsequent overwriting. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these ‘reappearances’ began to be chemically induced as the search for past texts underneath more recent writing increased, much like the rush to uncover, curate and reissue the output of marginalized or erased groups from the early nineteen seventies (the aforementioned Pentagram’s oxidization leads to other appearances from Bang!, Fire, Dust, Icecross, Sainte Anthony’s Fire et al). As such, these discovered palimpsests have become important historical, philosophical and ideological documents; in the most part because of what was initially erased, rather than what was then written over. Of course an original text, once dismantled from a complete manuscript into any number of individual pages, can appear in many newly produced texts and in new locations without the narrative cohesion or cultural context of its creation or without the other pages that complete the narrative. This is particularly problematic in the case of heavy metal because, as mentioned previously, the original texts were not framed by the generic understanding of the music, culture or practices or even name – heavy metal – and so its traces are scattered throughout numerous histories, archives and narratives. The paradox of preserving the texts of the past by erasing them and writing over them with the texts of the present creates a figurative use of the palimpsest that has been used as ‘a psychological, historical and social model’ (Dillon 2007: 3). The further privileging of the original erased texts

over the newer writing, complicates this paradox and furthers the bohemian idea that the past is more authentic than the present. It has been used as a model in and across a variety of disciplines, including literary theory where ‘The palimpsest becomes a figure for interdisciplinarity – for the productive violence of the involvement, entanglement, interruption and inhabitation of disciplines in and on each other’ (op cit, p.2). In using the palimpsest as a metaphor for heavy metal’s genealogy, a number of ways of thinking about the genre can be explored. Firstly, the idea of many, seemingly competing and contradictory stories and ways of engaging with the genre – journalistic, musicological, historiographic, academic – written over and entangling each other, enables the creation of multiple narratives that then cease to be competitive, that can then only be complementary, non hierarchical texts that seek not to create order but to celebrate the multiplicity of styles, forms, influences and trajectories. Secondly, the web of metal that is created through these sometimes disparate, sometimes clustered narratives allows for different moments of historical focus, both stylistically and chronologically – Bathory, Napalm Death, Venom, Judas Priest or Mountain for example – as key for different readers, musicians and fans, as pivotal points of influence within a seemingly endless narrative where they go “back to music that does certain things for them, or has certain typical traits” (Frimodt-Moller (2013: 77). And thirdly, it removes the linearity, singularity and point of origin focus of authenticity-focussed historical narratives. This allows, at any given moment, contradictory pasts of heavy metal to be simultaneously celebrated in ‘a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect’ (Barthes quoted in Dillon 2007: 82). These celebratory subsets of the genre coexist without contradicting the central core of heavy metal ideology, sound and style. Nor do they challenge or threaten the heavy metal narrative as a whole. This is notable in the last decade of



heavy metal where the subgenres of doom, thrash, black and death metal flourished, not in competition with each other but in complementary metal retro-progressive ‘new waves’, revivals and re-imaginings. All of these subsets are quintessentially metal. All subsets and their bands exist side-by-side on festival bills, all share common ideological and stylistic points and the ‘sufficient conditions for being a metal band’ (Frimodt-Moller 2013: 79). But all emphasize and amplify aspects of the genre, of the *palimpsestuous* trajectory of heavy metal’s ‘non written poetics’ (Fabbri 1981: 2) through their different routes and readings through the web-like narrative. All take different pages from some historically dismantled text and traverse through, and write over the existing and emerging texts. Whilst there are distinct sonic differences between say, Saint Vitus and Municipal Waste for example, they are both understandable as heavy metal in a broader sense. As Fabbri (1981) suggests ‘no one is willing to accept a style of genre as an identity document any longer’ (p.3). In either case Saint Vitus or Municipal Waste, as present bands amongst the strands of the heavy metal palimpsest, are only understandable in relation to the past. Saint Vitus in particular have been party to both erasure *and* oxidization in the palimpsestuous metal narrative.

The ‘present’ of the palimpsest is only constituted in and by ‘presence’ of texts from the ‘past’, as well as remaining open to further inscription by texts of the ‘future.’ [...] ‘ the palimpsest does not elide temporality but evidences the spectrality of any ‘present’ meet which always already contains with it ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ moments. (Dillon 2007: 37)

Whilst Saint Vitus have an intricate and complex relationship with the palimpsest, the relationship is perhaps most obviously evidenced by the primary rupture in heavy metal’s development. The new wave of British heavy metal (NWOBHM) was both a new and progressive musical departure and yet a return to the past. Its newness was reliant on a return to heavy metal’s beginnings; it could only be new because of its

recognition of, and departure from, the old. It acknowledged its own past whilst writing over it, leaving the original text in place, not only visible, but newly acknowledged by its departure. This 'palimpsestuous logic' (Dillon. 2007, p.8) is a constant in the forty plus years of the development of the genre. New 'waves', new subgenres and movements can only announce their newness through the writing over and acknowledgement of the old. 'The palimpsest is thus an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other' (Ibid. p.4). In this logic, recent movements or labels such as 'the new wave of traditional metal' - itself a self-conscious return to the nineteen eighties and the influence of the 'new wave of British heavy metal' - become, not an oxymoron, but an embodiment of heavy metal's retro-relationship with its own past.

### **Heavy origins**

Much of the historical investigation and study of heavy metal has been concerned with its beginnings, with the origin of the genre. Whether geographically, discussing the importance of Birmingham (Bayer 2009; Harrison 2010; Cope 2010), or Detroit (Carson. 2006), musicologically (Walser. 1993), historically (Brown. 2012; Frimodt-Moller. 2013), linguistically and journalistically, or critically (Weinstein. 2000, 2014; Brown 2015), or stylistically, in an unfolding narrative of genre after genre where '[t]he origins of the heavy metal sound can be traced back to the decline in popularity of psychedelic music at the end of the 1960s' (Bennett. 2001, p.43). Within this literature there has been both consensual agreement and wildly differing opinion. Whilst Black Sabbath's position in critical, academic and genre-community narratives appears consistently stable, beyond this there is little agreement, much myth making

and multiple truths. Psychedelia, the Blues, Rock, Hard Rock, Devil Rock, Downer Rock, Progressive Rock, Holst, Wagner, The Kinks, MC5, Blue Cheer, Cream, Hendrix, Steppenwolf, Iron Butterfly, Sir Lord Baltimore, Grand Funk Railroad, Atomic Rooster, Black Widow, Hapshash and the Coloured Coat, William Burroughs, Lester Bangs, and the omnipresent Beatles have all made appearances – voluntarily or otherwise – in these whodunit genealogical paternity tests, or what Andy Brown critically calls ‘the smoking gun’ (2012). This kind of journalistic investigation relies on there being a linear historical narrative, an ‘explanation that links a chain of events to their cause or point of origin’ (Ibid, p. 4) a proud mother and father at the head of the rock family tree. With a palimpsestuous imagining of heavy metal however, there can be no origin, no birth, no miraculous metallic conception of the genre, only multiple and equally miraculous conceptions of metal goddesses and gods:

The lofty origin is no more than a “metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth.” We tend to think that this is the moment of their greatest perfection, when they emerged dazzling from the hands of a creator or in the shadowless light of a first morning (Foucault, quoting Nietzsche, 1977: 143).

And whilst Black Sabbath may, communally, fulfill the role of the first born in Foucault’s ‘shadowless light’, the role of creator is *unattributed* and arguably *unattributable*. This, it could be suggested, is a central nodal-point in both the myriad metals that currently coexist under the umbrella of the ‘heavy metal’ meta-genre whilst also offering a possible reason for the astonishing longevity of the genre. That is, the heavy metal community – collectively at least – is ‘less concerned with origins conceived as single punctual events’ (Smith. 1996: ix) and more concerned with authenticity of sound, of ideology and of context as it pertains to their own understanding of subgenres, subsets, tastes and narratives. Whilst individual fans or sub-groupings may search for a mythical singular source of style – musically,

semiotically and/or ideologically within the maze-like structure of the palimpsest, the bands or albums that ‘capture the imagination with their spectral power’ (Dillon. 2007: 13), these strands have themselves, of course, questionable heritage. Each new individual or collective reading of the heavy metal palimpsest creates its own authenticity narrative, which may result in new musical production or new imaginings of history, where ‘authenticity is assured by ‘reflecting back’ to an earlier authentic practice.’ (Moore. 2002: 213)

The draw of origins does not necessitate a return to the nineteen-sixties or seventies, for there is no true origin to return to, only a narrative web and as such the nineteen-seventies is no more an authentic origin than the nineteen eighties (indeed the nineteen eighties are becoming an increasing subject of interest), depending on the subset of metal under discussion. The search for beginnings, creators and origins can be in terms of subgenre, or in terms of early periods in later developments of the genre or for some kind of imagined *golden age*. An age that may include spatially or chronologically disparate acts – Judas Priest and/or Metallica, Hellhammer and/or Mayhem – with little regard for the sanctity of chronological or historical similarity.

#### **Heavy Genealogy<sup>4</sup> (Slight Return)**

A genealogy of values, morality, asceticism and knowledge  
will never confuse itself with a quest for their origins  
(Foucault, 1977, p. 80).

This lack of chronological respect for origins is the third area where a palimpsestuous model of heavy metal’s development may be useful. Rather than seeing these fan fixations and musical and cultural influences on various performers as randomized or lacking in respect or proper historical regard, these engagements with the narrative of heavy metal can be read in genealogical terms. Not genealogical in the sense that I

first mentioned in this chapter – in terms of the family tree and its use by Pete Frame or Sam Dunn – but genealogical in the sense that Foucault, in his readings of Nietzsche, uses the term. For Foucault and for Nietzsche genealogy uncovers “‘Something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a *piecemeal fashion from alien forms*’ (Foucault. 1977: 142, emphasis mine). This genealogical practice is in diametric opposition to the practice of historiography, where ‘[w]e want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or point of reference’ (op cit, p.155). Yet this approach to its own past could be responsible for its longevity. For if there is no definitive landmark, the differing visits through the ‘entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times’ (p.139) will uncover innumerable influences, none of which can be real, true or definitive historical points. These innumerable influences, in turn, create any number of authentic heavy metals.

Fans of these multiple heavy metals, collectively articulate some of Nietzsche’s ideas about historiography, about history as they relate to the Platonic modalities of history. Firstly, once an area of the palimpsest has made itself culturally visible via any number of routes, there is a clamor to understand it. That is, fans wish to engage with musical ‘history’ in a way that expands it, as evidenced through the collecting of early or first vinyl pressings, vintage shirts, original concert tickets and memorabilia as well as wider contextual ephemera – films, fashions, magazines, badges, posters, books, and so on. However, their “unrealization” through the excessive choice of identities’ (Author ?p.94) offers more, rather than fixes, historical

ideas or narrative. Secondly, these collective metal histories make history almost impossible – that is the metal community show an ‘orientation towards the eternally valid examples of the past’ (Smith1996: ix) that allow, encourage and embrace newly emerging, ‘old’ examples of ‘heavy’, or celebrations of those artists, songs etc. that demonstrate proto-metal sensibilities. Thirdly, the fans, journalists and musicians of metal have an unending approach to history; ‘a passion for knowledge’ (Foucault, 1977, p.96) that fears no end (or beginning in this case). The emulation of styles, sounds, tunings, configurations, instrumentation and surrounding visual styles of the past, is not specific to heavy metal but is a practice that is a constant cyclical force in the genre and its approach to history. This, of course, can be seen through the continued new waves of traditional, black, death, doom or other extreme forms of metal, as well as more general returns to earlier styles.

To return, by way of example of this palimpsestuous approach to history, to the quote used earlier in this chapter by Andrew Weiner (1974) when discussing Black Sabbath’s and heavy metal’s surprising popularity; the group not only emerged during the decline of psychedelia (Bennett, 2001), or within the pages of the counter cultural press (Weinstein, 2014) and other contemporaneous bands utilizing heavier styles or amplification – Vanilla Fudge, Deep Purple et al, but during ‘a fairly spectacular boom in the black magic business’. A boom that as well as including film, tabloid and underground newspapers, novels and comics also included ‘full frontal nudie witches in the television night’, creating a palimpsest of ‘different and incongruous’ texts and allowing a narrative built from ‘alien forms’. As such the oxidization of the contextual palimpsest for heavy metal fans and artists leads not to an origin but to a plethora of popular culture; the cultural context of the period

between the end of Burroughs' Nova Trilogy and the eponymous Black Sabbath debut. The musical output of this period, as it pertains to the mythical birth of heavy metal has been, and will continue to be, discussed across fan and journalistic discourses, across the terrain of The Kinks' guitar sound and Mars Bonfire's use of the phrase 'heavy metal thunder'. Some of this historical material appears crisp and clear in the narrative, whilst other musical contributions have oxidized and continue to oxidize through and, much like the boom in interest in palimpsests in the late nineteenth century, there is an attempt to induce the oxidization of texts to see what lies beneath. Either way "retroactive memory is an important aspect of rock's relationship to occultism" (Bebergal. 2014, p.111). The work of Coven with their LP 'Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls' for instance (1970), or Black Widow's 'Sacrifice' (1970) have arguably impacted on more recent heavy metal output by way of the community's genealogical engagement with the heavy metal palimpsest. The female fronted Coven are cited as influential on a host of female-fronted occult rock acts such as Devil's Blood, Jex Thoth, Blood Ceremony, (Kelly 2011) and more recently Jess and the Ancient Ones, Mount Salem et al. The imagery from Black Widow's elaborate stage show was used on the cover of Electric Wizard's 'Demon Lung' single (1995). Electric Wizard are, in this respect, exemplars in the engagement with this kind of palimpsestuous logic, with their approach to heavy metal histories, contexts and traces. Numerous musical and non-musical contextual citations appear amongst the titles, credits and artwork accompanying their recorded and live performances: from German leftist group Baader Meinhof to the comic book 'Weird Tales', from actress Brigitte Bardot to film score composer Bruno Nicolai. Their live shows are accompanied by a light and film show supplied by the same team that provide visuals for Hawkwind, a show where 'the band are silhouetted in turquoise,

purple and red lights, while Jus Oborn's collection of VHS cult horror plays on the screens at the back of and flanking the stage' (Horsley. 2012). The 'Without Whom' credits on their 2010 album 'Black Masses' contains more non-musical references than it does musicians or bands (although they are there too; The Pretty Things and Serge Gainsbourg sitting alongside Alice Cooper and Venom). The films 'Defiance of Good' (Costello, 1975) and 'Terror at Orgy Castle' (Rotsler, 1972), the actress Susan George and film director Jess Franco are listed on the inner sleeve, whilst the outer sleeve is a psychedelic take on a promotional film photograph as featured on the 1975 cover of film journal 'Cine Revue'. 2007's album 'Witchcult Today', the predecessor to Black Masses similarly utilizes poster art and cultural references throughout. The cover features a stylized rendition of the poster art for Terence Fisher's 1968 film adaptation of Dennis Wheatley's novel 'The Devil Rides Out', (with the American film title 'The Devil's Bride' providing a title for a track on 1994's self-titled album). Mention is also given to exploitation movie directors Jose Larraz and Jean Rollin. Rollin's movie 'Frisson Des Vampires' provides the only cover version on the album with a song of the same name originally performed by Acanthus. The liner notes also contain a nod to fashion house 'Biba' as well as infamous sixties cult - The Process Church of the Final Judgement<sup>5</sup>. The latter, via one of their sixties pop-culture-evangelist magazines – in this instance the notorious 'Death' issue – also proved a source of artwork for the 2008 limited twelve inch single 'The Processean'. Whilst 2014's 'Time to Die' breaks with this growing tradition and contains no credit list, it does use the photograph that adorned Peter Cave's (1971) biker pulp novel 'Chopper' on the inner sleeve<sup>6</sup>. 2004's 'We Live' contains a track named in homage to Sergio Martino's movie 'Tutti i Colori del Buio' and credits the film's star – Edwige Fenech – in the inner sleeve as well as the director. 1996's 'Come My Fanatics' is housed in a



sleeve featuring a still of Anton Lavey from Oliver Hunkin's 1971 BBC television documentary 'The Power of the Witch' and although there are fewer direct mentions of influences on the sleeve, the track 'Wizard in Black' begins with a sample from George Grau's 1974 movie 'The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue' ('Let Sleeping Corpses Lie' in America) where the investigating police officer damns the hippy protagonist with the line 'You're all the same, the lot of you, with your long hair and faggot clothes. Drugs, sex, every sort of filth... and you hate the police, don't you', to which George, replies 'You make it easy'. The artwork for the soundtrack to Grau's movie (composed by Giuliano Sorgini) has also been used by the band as a T-shirt design. Other shirt designs have featured the artwork for Paul Wendkos's 1971 movie 'The Mephisto Waltz' and Luigi Scattini's 'Witchcraft '70'. These last two designs are important to mention as both of these designs have since been used by other heavy metal groups: the 'Mephisto Waltz' artwork turned up again in a t-shirt design for Japan's Church of Misery, themselves notorious trawlers of the palimpsest, searching for stories, images and samples of serial killers. The 'Witchcraft '70' artwork appeared again on the cover of Bloody Hammers' 2014 LP 'Under Satan's Sun'. In fact the use of underground film and comic horror imagery for album artwork, to advertise shows and for t-shirt designs is now common practice. The more obscure and hard to find, the better, demonstrating subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) through engagement with the heavy metal palimpsest's content and context. Church of Misery's further engagement with the palimpsest is regularly demonstrated through their use of cover versions on their albums including May Blitz, Blue Oyster Cult, Cactus, Captain Beyond and perhaps most obscurely a cover of Cindy and Bert - German Eurovision song contest perennials' 'Der Hund Von Baskerville' - itself a reworking of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid'. The artwork for more contemporary groups

such as Satan's Satyr's liberally uses 60s biker movie stills and their songs contain horror and biker movie samples and references. Swedish group Salem's Pot similarly demonstrate this historical fascination. They share their name with an exploitation novel and used an image of the aforementioned director Jess Franco's movie – 'The Devil Came from Akasava' (1971) featuring the actress Soledad Miranda for their 2014 album '...Lurar ut dig på prärien'. Beyond these examples, fan produced videos that combine the audio from heavy metal songs with clips from horror movies have also become commonplace, to the point that the style has been used in official video releases.

### Conclusion

Each new act of writing over this continuous palimpsest propels heavy metal forward, and yet brings the very past it over writes forward with it, giving it renewed interest. This retro-progressive discourse is arguably a central trait in heavy metal's longevity and, in part, responsible for the lack of what Byrnside (1975) calls the exhaustion phase of a genre, where 'artists repeat the success formulas of the glory days in a mechanical fashion, boring audiences and critics' (quoted in Weinstein. 2000: 43). However, this constant writing of heavy metal – musically, critically and historically - constantly defining and redefining the core and the peripheries of the genre, changes our understanding of what heavy metal is and what heavy metal was. Each new discovery, be it musical, filmic, comic or book, local or global, shifts the narrative of heavy metal. This constant shifting of the past of heavy metal arguably has more impact on the discourse of the genre than the cultural context of the progressive present. This impossibility of origin, these ambiguous beginnings have meant that heavy metal's cultures and narratives have been and continue to be, built on 'resurrective sorcery' (Dillon. 2007: 19).

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Reynolds's recent 'anti metal' confession in Pitchfork where he claimed that in the nineteen seventies he 'was appalled by the resurgent metal's misogyny and machismo, its phallic-ballistic imagery and warrior-male wank fantasies' (2014) should be taken into account here.

<sup>2</sup> Pentagram did release one official single under the name Macabre in 1972. Be Forewarned B/W Lazy Lady was issued on intermedia in two pressings of 500 copies. This is now a highly collectible record, particularly the first 500 copies where the name of the band is spelled incorrectly

<sup>3</sup> The Nova Trilogy consists of The Soft Machine (1961), The Ticket That Exploded (1962) and Nova Express (1964).

<sup>4</sup> Heavy Genealogy is the title of a 2011 article by Andy Brown that, utilizing Foucault's archaeological methods explores the parameters of heavy metal as a subject of academic enquiry.

<sup>5</sup> The Process Church of the Final Judgement were (initially) a UK based religious organization founded by disillusioned scientologists Robert de Grimston and Mary – Ann Mclean. They developed into a highly visual and visible 'cult' with branches across America and Canada (as well as the UK). They 'disdained flower power, tie-dye and patchouli oil. On the streets they wore black cloaks with hoods and Goat of Mendes patches, selling literature with titles like Death and Fear and Humanity is the Devil' (Parfey, A. 2009: 80). Their engagement with, and influence on, popular culture was prevalent at the time – their writing appearing in the liner notes of the first two Funkadelic albums and their magazines including interviews with stars of the day such as Mick Jagger among others. Their alleged association with Charles Manson and, by association, the Tate/LaBianca killings, through two books – Maury Terry's 'Ultimate Evil' and Ed Saunders 'The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion' damaged their reputation at the time but has led to increased interest in the intervening years. Since their eventual disintegration in the mid nineteen seventies they have been a source of material and influence for a number of bands including Skinny Puppy, Psychic TV, Integrity, Sabbath Assembly as well as Electric Wizard.

<sup>6</sup> This image also appears on the 2005 Japanese tour edition of Orange Sunshine's 'Homo Erectus' released on Leaf Hound records, itself an homage to British proto-metal group of the same name, who have reformed and are touring again.