

# From obsolete objects to souvenirs: metal fan productions and exchanges at the intersection of the cultural and financial economies

## Introduction

This article presents the findings of an in-depth case study of fan production that involves the creation of concert souvenirs by re-purposing old vinyl records. The case study is part of a larger research project that investigates the different ways in which popular music fans engage with music and music technologies. It explores how the meanings of music enter their everyday lives, and how fans participate in the production of popular music, through a series of case-studies, each one deploying different methodological approaches including ethnography, self-ethnography, cultural biography of things, textual analysis, and in-depth interviewing. The present case-study is situated at the intersection of fields that include studies of fandom, heavy metal subculture, and media technologies and everyday life. By looking at the fan productions of Michał, a marketing manager and a lifelong metal fan who lives in Dublin, Ireland, this article describes the transformation of obsolete objects to useful, meaningful artifacts through fan labour, and the way in which wider socio-economic, cultural, subcultural, and technological factors shape those practices. I further discuss how fan productions under certain conditions represent practices and artifacts exchanged in the cultural economy, in the form of cultural capital and symbolic capital, but also take on the form of economic capital and are exchanged in the financial economy. The findings of this study contribute to the limited but growing literature on heavy metal fandom and the broader literature on fan labour, by offering a methodical in-depth account of the complex ways in which heavy metal fans engage with the raw materials of the music industry.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section presents the context of the study, the methodological approach, and identifies the scholarly fields in which the study is situated and in which it makes a contribution. The second section focuses on the social life of the object in question (i.e. vinyl record concert souvenir), and traces how a raw material of the cultural industry is infused with new meanings and value through a process of re-working that involves a material and an affective component, as well as changes in the wider material culture within which objects are situated. The third section looks at Michał's biography focusing on his experiences of growing up as a heavy metal fan in Poland, and elucidates a broader history of fan production in the cultural economy that predates and underlies the current process of reworking the raw materials of the financial economy. It also considers other aspects of Polish culture and technological trends that support practices of fan production. The fourth section describes how the objects in question are exchanged at the intersection of the financial and cultural economy. In doing so it reflects upon the notion of "poaching" (De Certeau 1984; Jenkins 1992) and suggests ways in which it should be reviewed to take more into account the *material disenfranchisement* of fans alongside discursive disenfranchisement.

## Research background

This study took place in the context of a research project that explores different aspects of how popular music enters the everyday life of fans. The present article presents the findings from an in-depth case study of a heavy metal fan, Michał, who creates concert souvenirs by using old vinyl records. Michał is a marketing manager and a lifelong fan of heavy metal who moved to Dublin, Ireland, from Poland. Michał's involvement with this research project happened after I came across a photograph (see illustration 1) he posted on Immolation's (Death metal band from New York, USA) Facebook page. The photo in question included Michał and a friend of his holding what appeared to be an Immolation vinyl record signed by the band. The signatures were not on the

album cover but on the actual record. I eventually realised that it was not a real Immolation album, but a random vinyl record with a photograph of the band and the band logo in the area at the centre occupied by the label. I was interested in this practice of heavy metal fan production, collecting, and of the role obsolete commodities reworked as “memory objects” (Stefani 2015: 3).

I contacted Michał via private message on Facebook, explaining my research and I asking if he would be willing to talk to me about his vinyl record concert souvenirs. Michał was asked for his informed consent not only initially but at various stages of the project, including the final draft of the article which was sent to him to read, provide feedback, and approve or disapprove. The data reported in this article were produced during an initial in depth semi-structured interview that took place over Viber and lasted one hour and half, as well as a series of discussions over Facebook messenger that took place over a period of several months. The design of my interview schedule and engagement with my research subject draws on Rubin and Rubin's (2005: 21) responsive interviewing approach, namely a flexible research design which facilitates depth rather than breadth of understanding. This open-ended type of interviewing is important for this project in two ways: firstly, it allows participants to ‘suggest topics, concerns, and meanings that are important to them’ (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 33), and, secondly, it is conducive for engaging the research participant as a conversational partner (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 34; see also Byrne 2004: 181).

Compared to older projects on which I have worked where my research subjects occupied fields – such as the web design industry or charitable organisations – I did not occupy myself, I felt that there was much better rapport with the research participant. During our various conversations, Michał and I would share and compare experiences of being metal fans, as well as photographs of our cassette tape collections and other music-related artifacts. It was interesting to hear that Michał's parents expected him to stop listening to metal when he would grow up, and, in turn, to share similar experiences my friends and I had as teenagers. In moments during which I would forget my researcher role we also exchanged videos on YouTube, and Michał introduced me to some obscure Polish death metal and punk bands. In some occasions these impromptu interactions introduced topics that initially seemed beyond the scope of this research (for example, the Polish military service), but, nevertheless, resulted in valuable information. As a result of my interaction with Michał I also reflected upon privileges I enjoyed as a young fan of metal, privileges of which I was unaware, such as the luxury of being able to afford the purchase of three or sometimes four albums per month. Overall, the interviewing process did not feel like an interrogation, and I hope that Michał was not simply being polite when he told me that he had a “lovely chat” after the end of our first discussion.

Single case studies have been disparaged in certain disciplines, and by scholars closer to the positivist end of the epistemological spectrum who are more concerned with explanation, causation, and generalisability of findings. In the more interpretivist/constructivist approaches, and to those scholars more concerned with understanding and describing, single case studies represent a valuable methodological approach. For instance, Flyvbjerg (2006: 5-7) has highlighted the advantages of single-case in-depth research both by critiquing the purported advantages of large-N studies, but also by pointing out the value of learning and building expert knowledge that reside within depth single cases, and the significance of proximity and receiving “feedback from those under study” for scientific discovery. Several times throughout the current investigation I contacted Michał and asked for clarifications. Overall, as this study demonstrates, single-case studies can be invaluable in revealing the wealth of social and economic processes and embodied histories involved in seemingly ordinary practices such as the creation of concert souvenirs, and in understanding how metal music fans are implicated in the creation of their own culture through habitual practices of appropriation.

As such, my research engages with, and contributes to, a variety of related literatures including studies of fandom, heavy metal fandom, and media technologies and everyday life; specifically fan production and cultural resistance, and the notion of "poaching" (see De Certeau 1984; Fiske 1989; Silverstone 1989; Jenkins 1992). It asks how my research participant engages with the raw materials of culture and the strategic narratives (in both semantic and material terms) of the powerful. Is he successful in producing his own tactical narratives, and how valuable are concepts such as affirmational fandom and mimetic fandom (Hills 2014) in helping us reflect upon the character of such productions? How are they situated and exchanged within the cultural field and the economic field? Godwin's (2016) discussion of the tension between the exchange-value and use-value of fan productions is a valuable one in understanding my participant's experiences.

How is social class implicated in heavy metal fan productions? Scholarly interest in fan labour is often spent on fandoms that are relatively privileged, that possess disposable income allowing them to participate in what Hills (2002: 4) calls commodity-completist practices. Shildrick and MacDonald (2006: 7) observe a "theoretical marginality of questions of class and other forms of structural inequality in the making and meaning of youth and cultural identity and experience". In their review of studies that do pay attention they note that "not all people are able to – or want to – access leisure experiences or create cultural identities in the same way" (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006: 10). The present study is an example of a heavy metal fan who to a large degree lacked the financial resources that grant access to heavy metal fandom, a fact that shaped his fan production practices. Finally, it further contributes to a relatively neglected area of research, that of the heavy metal fandom. The heavy metal subculture was ignored by subcultural theorists for many years, and was discarded as an example of the alienated consumerist working classes. Heavy metal fans were seen more as passive consumers rather than poachers whose fan practices represented instances of resistance to the status quo (Brown 2003). Although there is now a rich literature documenting the history of heavy metal, the music and the themes (see Kahn-Harris, 2006, for a comprehensive review of scholarly research on heavy metal) there is still limited research on metal fandoms. Recent exceptions include Sinclair's (2011) discussion of creative heavy metal rituals, Hoad's (2017) account of heavy metal fan fiction, and Yavuz's (2017) discussion on emotional responses of death/doom metal fans. The most detailed accounts of fan productions in metal subcultures are not academic (see Mudrian 2004; Ekeroth 2008). A more comprehensive engagement with key debates takes place during the discussion in the remainder of the article.

### **The social life of objects: From discarded vinyl records to souvenirs**

Of central interest in the phenomenon under investigation is the biography of the objects in question. In this section I introduce Michał's project, I discuss the life-journey of Michał's vinyl record concert souvenirs, their various transformations, and the structural determinants and personal labour that are responsible for these transformations.

Michał's vinyl record concert souvenirs are produced within the wider context of a project called GO Production. GO Production is an initiative started by Michał in Dublin. It is a not for profit organisation whose objective is to report on and promote cultural events in Dublin. Michał repeatedly noted that he has no intention of turning this project into a for-profit organisation, and that he simply wants to connect with people, access cultural events, and inspire others to engage with Dublin's cultural world. The project's main platform is Facebook, where Michał posts photos of events he has attended accompanied by brief commentaries. The page also includes an upcoming-events calendar. In some cases, the GO Production brand grants Michał free access to events he wants to attend. The compensation he receives for the work he does for GO Production

takes the form of free access to some events, and the pleasure of going to events and meeting people. Some of the people he meets are musicians whose concerts he attends (usually not for free). In these occasions he uses his GO Production credentials to meet the musicians and have them sign his vinyl record concert souvenirs.

Michał creates vinyl record concert souvenirs to satisfy a specific cultural desire, namely the desire to keep the memory of an enjoyable experience, that cannot be satisfied through commercially produced artifacts. He uses old records that he bought wholesale to create his vinyl record concert souvenirs. He paid 25 euros for 200 assorted vinyl records. These were random albums that meant nothing to Michał, just like the millions of unwanted vinyl records that populate charity shops and used-records stores in every city, the contemporary graveyards of mass produced popular music. In Straw's (2000) investigation of the life cycle of cultural commodities records such as these are being referred to as "obsolete objects", a form of "cultural waste, as their meanings and value are exhausted". Michał's fan labour breathes new cultural life in those dead cultural commodities, and waste becomes a resource (Moore 2012: 3) as each object is re-worked both *materially* and *affectively*. These processes are directed towards transforming the vinyl record from an album of a random band divested from personal meaning, to an artifact that signifies a meaningful cultural moment.



Illustration 1: Michał (right) and his friend holding a vinyl record souvenir from an Immolation concert.

The material re-working adds the visual signifiers that will eventually anchor the object to the cultural moment in question. In advance of each concert Michał consults the band's social media and retrieves a photograph of the band's most recent line up. Next, he designs the image to include the band members, the band logo, the date of the concert, and the GO Production logo. Then he uses a label maker and prints the image to be placed the centre of the vinyl record. After the concert he tries to meet the band and ask them to sign the record. He uses permanent markers for the

autographs which, according to Michał, are the most expensive element of this endeavour. Sometimes the signed records will go in frames that he buys from IKEA. Many of those objects will be mounted on the walls of his flat, although not all of them due to lack of space. Michał expressed the desire to have a room of his own one day where the walls will be covered with vinyl record concert souvenirs.

During and after the event the object undergoes further re-working which is affective in its nature. The materially modified object becomes infused with the emotions and memories from the concert. This is what Stewart (1993) calls "a metonymic piece of an experience and a prompt to re-enter the narrative or memory of that experience" (cited in Bennet and Rogers 2016). Michał talks warmly about an Asphyx (death metal band from the Netherlands) vinyl record souvenir which he has placed on one of his bedroom walls, noting that his wife jokingly points out that they do not have their own picture on the wall but they have the faces of the band members from Asphyx. He explained that when he was at the Asphyx concert he noticed that everyone was dancing and headbanging, as opposed to other concerts where many attendees are pre-occupied with their smartphones. That realisation made the moment special for him. He also remembers meeting the band members and having a pleasant chat with them after the concert. The autographs remind him of the time he spent with the band and how that made him feel. The reason why this object assumes such a central position in Michał's domestic environment is because it is a memory object, an object invested with a fond memory from the concert.

At least three different periods in the life of this object, that has currently evolved into a vinyl record souvenir, can be hypothesised. Each period is characterised by what Pearce (1994: 21) calls the deep structure of society, its rules, its range of possibilities, in other words its language. During the first stage, when the album in question was released, vinyl records represented either the dominant mode of music dissemination, or at least a still accepted mode. The album was probably listened to, someone perhaps established an even deeper relationship with it, maybe it was a present by a loved one, or maybe it was somebody's first ever music purchase. The owner of the album deciphered aspects of its intertextual character, and maybe even invented some new meanings. The second period is the one during which the album in question was transformed into an obsolete commodity. This shift was probably fueled by record companies that promoted the digital format of music dissemination (McLeod 2005). Scientific rationality and capitalist innovation processes dictated market practices and consumption discourses. The rules that formed the language of society at that point probably relegated analogue media to a thing of the past. Consumers probably shifted their loyalty away from analogue to digital media. Maybe the album's owner donated it to a charity or a used records shop, and re-purchased the album on CD or mp3. The vinyl record, by virtue of the cultural depreciation of vinyl records, ended up in a record stall full of albums stripped off their exchange value (sold for next to nothing) and their use value (separated from the web of interactions that endowed them with subjective meanings). The third period is the present one during which vinyl records are experiencing a resurgence (Foucart et al. 2016; Bartmanski and Woodward 2013). During this period vinyl records are ascribed with meanings of techno-nostalgia and authenticity that make them desirable, or at least relevant, once again. In that sense, what makes an obsolete commodity useful is not simply the restless creativity of fans, but also the changing language of society, its material culture discourses in which vinyl records are elevated into a distinguished artifact worth investing in.

Stopping at the social biography of the vinyl record concert souvenir would constitute an incomplete account of the phenomenon under investigation. This practice is not a discontinuous, disconnected instance of fan production and fan creativity. It is supported and predated by a rich biography of active engagement with the materials of culture, a rich biography of active

consumption. Michał's current practices are the result of a habitus (Bourdieu 1977: 72) of being productive. Whilst the creation of vinyl record concert souvenirs is a practice primarily underlain by the desire to actively engage with the raw materials of the financial economy in order to customise them in pursuit of realising his cultural pleasures, in the past Michał's fan productions would also be used as commodities in their own right that participate in exchanges in the financial economy.

### **A broader culture of fan production**

In order to gain a fuller understanding of Michał's vinyl record concert souvenir productions we need to account for his personal fan biography and how this biography is linked to wider social, economic, and cultural structures. I am deploying what Mills (2000 [1959]) has called the *sociological imagination*; the pursuit of understanding social phenomena by taking into account various forces of history, structural determinants, and personal biographies, and how these interact to produce practices that shape social life. I subsequently argue that Michał's active engagement with cultural objects is not an one-off practice, but one preceded and supported by social and technological structures and a long history of fan productions and active consumption in different areas of social life, making the practice part of Michał's habitus.

Michał's introduction to heavy metal music happened in the early 1990s through what I call *entry-level*<sup>1</sup> bands of the genre, such as Iron Maiden, Metallica and Megadeth. The first album he listened to was Metallica's *Kill 'em all* (1983). Michał remembers that metal was not a popular type of music in his hometown, Radom, or generally in Poland. Heavy metal concerts by local obscure bands would take place in local community centres. The relative success of a local band that frequented one of those community centres worked as a centripetal force attracting metal fans from around the area. During secondary school Michał started to socialise with teenagers from more distant areas that "were metal", a phrase used to denote that one is a fan of heavy metal. According to Michał, if one has heavy metal in their veins it never goes away; they "are metal" for life. Together they discovered more bands and eventually started developing an interest in more extreme subgenres such as death and black metal.

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1 Bands that are widely recognised as cornerstones of the genre, and have known commercial success to the extent that they dominate attention in the genre in terms of presence in electronic and physical music outlets.



Illustration 2: A segment of Michał's official cassette tape collection.

Michał described the fan practices taking place in his group of friends in terms of an object-oriented fandom (Rehak 2012, 2014). Common practices in Michał's group, in line with other manifestations of heavy metal culture (see Straw 1984; Weinstein 1991; Arnett 1991; Brown 2007; Snell and Hodgetts 2007), included drinking alcohol, hanging out in local clubs that played heavy metal

music, such as "Shocker" and "Joker", buying heavy metal cassette tapes from HIT, the only local store that sold tapes, t-shirts and badges in the genres of heavy metal, rock and punk, wearing band t-shirts, reading heavy metal magazines, and attending heavy metal concerts. These were identified as important subcultural markers by Michał. Subcultural boundaries (see Williams and Copes 2005) were further reinforced through the invention of "others" that were considered enemies. In the early 1990s, according to Michał, metal fans and punks would fight each other, but later on they united to fight against skinheads.

All these are common activities that constitute the various products of the heavy metal industry. Albums, merchandise, and concerts, specifically represent a form of synergy (Turow 1992: 683) an "optimal mixture of organisational breadth and depth" aimed at maximising the profit made by any given brand. From a traditional Marxist perspective these activities represent the commodification of culture and the inculcation of passive consumers. However, a closer look at Michał and his friends' practices reveals a much more complex relationship with the music industry. This relationship is characterised less by consumption of official commodities, and more by active fan productions that nevertheless sustain a latent market and anchor heavy metal fans onto it.

Much of the fan production in which Michał would engage was material and extended to all his music related activities. For instance, he would drink vodka that he had made at home, wear homemade t-shirts, make his own band badges and patches to put on jackets, and he would listen to music on home-recorded cassette tapes. This does not mean that no official materials circulated within Michał's heavy metal network of friends; those materials that did, would be shared among friends. Everyone in the group would share the same one copy of Metal Hammer (international heavy metal magazine) or Morbid Noizz (Polish metal magazine). But people in Michał's group of metal friends also made their own extreme metal zine, fittingly titled "Dead Stench" (see illustration 3 and 4). Each of them would contribute based on the type of capital they possessed; cultural capital in the form of drawing or writing skills (one of the creators was a tattoo artist), or economic capital in the form of a Xerox machine (owned by one's father who had a photo studio). Michał and his friends would record and exchange cassette tapes, tap into the stylistic narratives of heavy metal bands to design their own band t-shirts, and other music paraphernalia. During a Deicide (Death metal band from Florida, USA) concert some fans, including Michał, got hold of Glen Benton's (Deicide's vocalist) t-shirt and ripped it apart. He repurposed the torn piece of clothing into a patch which he sewed onto his jacket.

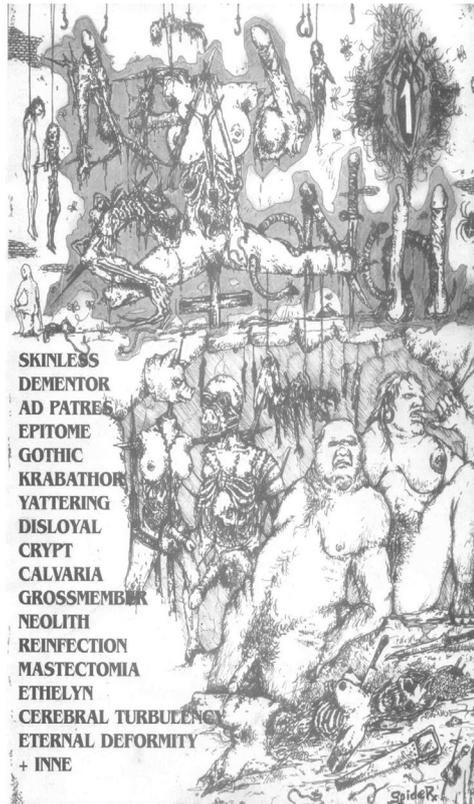


Illustration 3: Dead Stench - an extreme metal zine Michał was involved in making

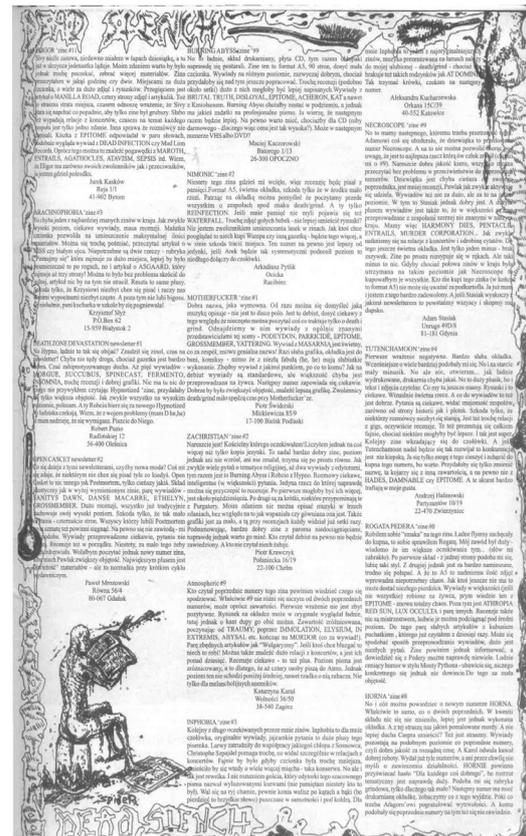


Illustration 4: An inventory that can be found inside Dead Stench of other Polish fan-made zines

The practice of modifying artifacts manifests itself in other areas of Michał's social life, one example being the military. Conscription in Poland was abolished in 2009, but as Michał reached draft age in the 1990s he was forced to do military service for two years. According to Michał one of the traditions of men completing their military service, and signifying the passing from military life back into citizenship, was to fashion a shawl from their bed sheet. Michał suggests that there are many ways to paint it, and that more senior cadets would offer junior cadets tips on how to paint it. According to Michał, it was easy to decorate his shawl since he was already making his own band t-shirts for years. In a Bourdieusian sense, the *logic* of modifying objects existed in different *fields* that Michał occupied throughout his life, and has become an embodied cultural competence, part of Michał's *habitus* (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127).

A technological factor that encouraged fan productions in the case of Michał and his friends was the availability of hometaping equipment. Michał's first tape-recorder was a *Kasprzak* single deck cassette player/recorder which he used to record music from the radio. Later on his father bought him a *Radiomagnetofon International AK-21* double deck cassette recorder which he used for his hometaping practices. According to Frith (1986: 272), hometaping is a case where the usual argument that "technological change is inspired by and makes possible the increased capitalist control of the market" does not stand. As with similar practices of unauthorised music collecting and trading around the world, Michał and his friends engaged in practices of unauthorised music reproduction after having received mixed signals from the music industry: record companies told

them "don't", whilst electronics producers and audio equipment companies said "do". Frith (1986: 274) offers the "multinationals' ignorance of the implications of their own inventions" as an explanation. McLeod's (2005: 526) account of how record companies failed to anticipate digital piracy when they pushed the switch from cassettes and vinyl to CDs supports this view. On the other hand, even in the case of extended tape-trading like in the case of Michał and his friends it could be hypothesised that unauthorised music sharing supports the music industry by helping develop and sustain a latent market, a set of potential consumers, that may be dormant but under different (more affluent) socio-economic circumstances might materialise.

Finally, in order to better understand Michał and his friends' practices, the broader culture of exchanging unauthorised content in Poland must be taken into account. Piracy is a widespread practice in Polish society. According to Filiciak and Toczyski (2014: 122) "at the level of everyday practice, informal exchange of cultural content is widely accepted in Poland". This practice seems to be legitimated by virtue of content that could "not be obtained in a legal way" (Toczyski 2014: 123). According to research by Mroz (2016) Polish consumers use unauthorised media content primarily for financial reasons, such as high prices of authorised products and the low income of consumers. Thornton's (1995: 102) claim that young people invest in what she calls "subcultural capital" - primarily of the objectified type - with abandon because they "enjoy a momentary reprieve from necessity", is relevant here. As Thornton points out, such practices of conspicuous consumption that are central in subcultural distinctions, are not possible for young people who are poor. Michał implied in several occasions throughout our discussions that his family's material position had a bearing on his cultural practices. Michał did not own vinyl records or a record player when he lived in Poland, as these were expensive artifacts which his large family of six siblings could not afford. Piracy, in that sense, becomes an important avenue for acquiring the desired objectified cultural capital. Finally, the culture of informal exchange of cultural content can also be interpreted as part of the cultural legacy of the communist era. Communism collapsed in Poland in 1989, but there is evidence to suggest that despite "widespread support for [...] the market, [...] a large proportion of Poles support[ed] a substantial role for the state in the provision of individuals' well-being and reject[ed] a widening of economic inequality" (Slomczynski and Shabad 1998: 751). Making inferences about Michał's practices on the basis of loosely defined "structural" factors would be problematic. However, it could be argued that sharing is in line with a system of values that is antithetical to a "market economy based on the private ownership of property" (Slomczynski and Shabad 1998: 750).

### **Exchanges at the intersection of the cultural and the financial economies**

In this section I discuss the various exchange relations in which Michał's fan productions participated. I discuss the role of fan-made objects in granting subcultural capital within Michał's group of *metalheads*. I further discuss how the same fan productions also have exchange value and represent a form of economic capital. I then put forward the argument that fan production practices take place at the intersection of the financial economy and the cultural economy (Fiske 1989: 27), and that they could reflect desires to overcome both discursive and material disenfranchisement.

The production and collection of certain objects is implicated in the acquisition of fan credentials. Cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1986), either in its embodied (subcultural knowledge) or objectified form (subcultural artifacts), is exchanged among fans for recognition. A rich history in studies of subcultures and fandom indicates that there is a legitimate way of being a fan (see Thornton 1995). Those lacking sufficient cultural capital (Godwin 2016: 41) can be seen as fake. There is evidence to suggest that many fans have a love/hate relationship with objectified cultural capital, especially commercially produced artifacts. Richardson and Turley (2007: 34) point out that hardcore fans' "definition of 'real' fandom typically does not make reference to consumer goods". Godwin (2016)

demonstrates how customised objects can distinguish the true fan from the bogus fan. The effort involved in customising suggests commitment, so it is valued more. Hills (2002), however, notes the conflict between commodity-completist and anti-consumerist attitudes in fandoms. Although the true fan should not fall prey to the cultural industry's attempts to capitalise on their passion, they are at the same time tempted by the available merchandise. Specifically with regard to metal subcultures, Brown (2007) shows that commercially produced band t-shirts play an important role both as subcultural markers and as classifiers among members of the subculture. In the case of Michał, objects were important, albeit not official commodities. During one of our conversations he claimed that one could tell a "good metal guy", meaning a true metal fan, by the amount of pirated cassette tapes they owned. In a different occasion he characterised the practice of hometaping as "pure" and "real underground, not commercial". A collection of pirated cassette-tapes represented a form of objectified cultural capital that endowed the owner with the status of the true fan and, granted them recognition within the subculture. For Michał and his friends, however, the importance placed on the relatively cheap hometaped cassettes over official commercially produced artifacts is also *consistent with the aspirations associated with their habitus of disenfranchisement* (for the relationship between habitus, field and practice see Bourdieu 1990: 56; Maton 2008: 51).

Similarly, when Michał described his vinyl record concert souvenirs, he claimed that he wants to have a unique artifact that nobody else has. Muggleton (2000: 63) has deployed the term "distinctive individuality" to denote how subculturalists distinguish themselves from others. The same could be applied within subcultures, as the example of Michał suggests. Michał seeks to distinguish himself by owning a unique artifact. Yet, his distinctive individuality is not individualistic. During one of our discussions he explicitly stated that he wants to inspire other people through his project to do the same or come up with similar projects.

What is more interesting is that those products created in the cultural economy would occasionally be exchanged in the financial economy. Michał shared a story from his youth when such an exchange took place. According to Michał outside each concert one could find *touts*, known in Poland as "horses": people who would buy concert tickets and then try to sell them in inflated prices or exchange them for various goods that were on offer. Some of those goods that would change hands in return for a concert ticket would be homemade products of fan production. In 1996 Michał and five of his friends went to a Metallica concert in Katowice. Only one among those six people had a ticket. Michał and his friends wandered around the venue in search for tickets and eventually spotted the "horses" who were selling them. Michał did not have any money, but he managed to secure a ticket in exchange for a Metallica t-shirt he had made himself and a bottle of home-made vodka. Touts were not fan themselves, so they would then try to make monetary profit by finding fans who were willing to pay money for Michał's homemade t-shirt.

Various examples of fan production that enter market relations have been documented. Marshal (2003) describes bootlegging, a practice that involves fans who produce and sell unauthorised recordings, as a commercial enterprise distinct from other non-commercial fan productions such as tape-trading. However, these are different to Michał's practices in that fan productions are produced in the cultural economy and are, in principle, destined for fan use. Their purpose is not to be exchanged in the financial economy. However, under conditions of lack of economic capital they can be exchanged – and, most importantly, they are accepted to be exchanged after being subjected to "localised (fan-based) use-valuations" (Hills 2002: 35) – in the financial economy. What is important is not only the willingness of fans to use their fan productions as economic currency, but also the willingness of other parties (e.g. "horses") to accept them as such. This practice is reminiscent of Godwin's (2016) discussion on the tensions between exchange-value and use-value of customised action figures. She points out that the social and cultural capital accumulated through

fan practices does not rule out further transformations into financial capital. What is more, according to Godwin (2016: 45), in some fandoms "going pro" and monetising from fan practices constitutes an aspiration, which, of course, is not the case with Michał.

Could these acts of fan production that populate Michał's biography, from drawing t-shirts and making badges, to making vinyl record souvenirs, be conceptualized in terms of "poaching" (see De Certeau 1984; Jenkins 1992)? The described practices are undeniably examples of "consumers" whose fan labour adds cultural meaning and cultural value to everyday products. A white t-shirt is transformed into a band t-shirt. In this instance a fan is using a copyright protected brand (i.e. the band name and aesthetic), something that does not belong to her/him, to modify an object (i.e. a generic white t-shirt) into something new that gives her/him pleasure. It is a practice of *making do* with the exchange system of the official market from which she/he is partially excluded; partially because she/he is excluded from purchasing the *commodity* but not from copying the *style* which eludes some of the controls imposed to culture by the music industry. At the same time the fan's labour also adds economic value by creating a new product that can be used as economic currency. Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) have talked about the importance of addressing economic exclusion and its impact on youth cultural activities, and in their review of post-subcultural theory they observe a "theoretical marginality of questions of class and other forms of structural inequality in the making and meaning of youth and cultural identity and experience" (Shildrick and MacDonald 2006: 7). Although Shildrick and MacDonald's critique is directed to post-subcultural scholars, the term "poaching" also needs to be revised in order to account for the wider practices of exchange in the intersection of culture and economy, and to include the notion of *material disenfranchisement* (i.e. being excluded from engaging in commodity-completist practices) alongside *discursive disenfranchisement* (i.e. being excluded from the writing of the strategic narratives). Here, unlike Jenkins's (1992: 24) account according to which fans rework texts that frustrate them because they fail to satisfy their discursive desires, poaching takes place but rather because fans cannot afford to buy the original products. Hills (2002), in an effort to understand the basis on which fans work for free to modify cultural texts, offers the explanation that fans both volunteer their labour power and derive pleasure from it. To this I would include a recognition of those less affluent fans, like Michał, who would be unable to even access cultural activities, let alone seek to transform them to fulfill their desires.

A final point needs to be made regarding fan productions that enter the financial economy. Hills (2014) has pointed out that material fan productions like the ones described throughout this article have a bad name in fandom studies. He explains that material productions are often seen as inferior and as privileged fan practices because they are concerned with imitation, and ultimately result in restating **canon**, as opposed to transformational fandom associated with people that have been excluded from the production of discourse. Similar concerns have been raised by Brown (2003: 212-13), who contends that heavy metal's misreading as based around (passive) consumption disqualified it from being considered a subculture by Birmingham cultural scholars. Brown eloquently remedies this problem by identifying it as one originating in subcultural theory and its method of identifying "authentic" subcultures. In a similar move, Hills's (2014) discussion on mimetic fandom attempts to salvage material fan productions from the negative connotations associated with affirmational fandom, by pointing out their transformative potential. As I have argued, characterising material productions as "privileged" can be highly problematic in cases where fans lack the economic means to participate in cultural activities. On the other hand, an outcome of the mimetic character of those activities for fans is to become "part of a grassroots promotion for a brand" (Hills 2014). Michał's homemade band t-shirts and vinyl record concert souvenirs might indeed represent instances of fan creativity, ways of tackling material

disenfranchisement, and sources of cultural and symbolic capital (i.e. recognition), but they also constitute a type of free advertising and "inauthentic brand extending" (Hills 2014).

## Conclusion

Michał's vinyl record concert souvenirs constituted the springboard for an inquiry of fan creativity, both in terms of making do with a culture that excludes materially disenfranchised fans, but also in terms of re-purposing objects and discovering new ways of deriving pleasure from their use. In this article, I described Michał's material and affective labour alongside a wider cultural re-evaluation of vinyl culture as the conditions under which old unwanted vinyl records are turned into new artifacts. I then moved on to consider Michał's contemporary practices as part of an older journey originating in metal subculture, material disenfranchisement, and supported by technological innovations in the electronics industry. As such Michał's present disposition of re-purposing obsolete objects is consistent with a habitus of active engagement with the materials of popular culture. Michał's creativity and fan productions, furthermore, assume different meanings and are ascribed new value as they move between the cultural economy and the financial economy. As opposed to common understandings of fan labour being appropriated once it enters the economic field, in the case of Michał's productions they are often used for his own benefit in the absence of economic capital. This does not, however, rule out the appropriation of his fan labour by the market.

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