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Heavy and Hateful: Growth of White Supremacy and Neo-Nazism in Skinhead Punk and Black Metal

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Introduction

Music and politics often go hand in hand, as all art does, tied together by the beliefs of the musicians themselves and the subcultures that flock around any given genre. Whether political beliefs are directly expressed through music or merely exist alongside it is highly variable, but in the past several decades there has been an immense growth in a particular kind of overtly political music: white supremacist hate music. This term describes any music, regardless of genre, that expresses racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia, nationalism and other far-right extremist beliefs, often with the express purpose of recruiting or radicalizing listeners to those beliefs. Despite many record labels and streaming services holding anti-hate speech policies, many white supremacist artists remain active (and popular) on those platforms; on Spotify alone, several popular fascist musicians receive tens or hundreds of thousands of listeners every month ("Mayhem;" "Burzum;" "Graveland").

One of the most popular kinds of contemporary hate music is "Nazi rock," which includes far-right versions of rock, punk and heavy metal. Two of the most popular genres within this umbrella are skinhead punk and National Socialist black metal (or NSBM). Both of these genres have their own respective subcultures, with their own fashion, aesthetics and social norms that dictate how those involved with the scene are expected to look and act. However, neither skinhead nor black metal subcultures were explicitly fascist from their inception: much the opposite in fact, both being born from working class musical movements. This isn't to say that racists and fascists did not exist within the subcultures at their inception; I merely want to stress

that subcultures are not homogenous ideological entities and that the racism they are known for today is not what originally defined them. Even today, neither genre exists purely as hate music, and there is internal conflict among members of opposing political factions within each.

This paper seeks to explore how these two particular genres and their respective subcultures evolved over time and how that evolution facilitated the growth of the fascist elements that they are known for today. I will do this by discussing the history of each genre, focusing on specific significant events; analyzing aspects of the subculture and identifying where they overlap with existing white supremacist ideologies, rhetoric or recruitment methods; and discussing how those subcultural aspects and historical events combined to facilitate the growth of the far-right presence within each genre. In addition, I intend to elaborate on the specific ways in which this music is used to spread far-right beliefs by examining specific reactionary actions taken by members of the subcultures, connections between specific bands and existing political movements, and the lyrical content of songs from these genres.

Before I begin, there are three preliminary statements I would like to make. The first is a geographic and chronological specification. The subject matter of this paper is predominantly concerned with the United Kingdom, several European countries (including Germany, Norway and Greece) and, to a lesser extent, the United States. I will be discussing events between the 1960s and the 2020s. Claims and generalizations that I make regarding either punk or metal should be viewed within these limitations and may not apply to the punk, metal, and hate music of other parts of the world.

Second is my use of the terms "subculture" and "scene." For the purposes of this paper, I am using these terms largely interchangeably to refer to people who can be grouped together by their self-selected identification with specific music, fashion, ideology and/or lifestyle, and for

whom the combination of those specific elements forms a persona that is recognizable and distinct from the broader culture within which these people live. A given member of a subculture does not have to identify with every aspect of that subculture in order to be considered a part of it; again, no culture is homogeneous, and variations in any of the aforementioned characteristics can exist across members of any specific subculture. I should note, however, that I am not a sociologist, nor have I done extensive research into these specific terms; as such I would caution you against using my definitions outside of the context of the following pages.

Finally, I would like to address my own position as the author. I have strong opinions regarding this subject matter, which I would like to make clear so that the reader may understand my perspective. I am a socialist who is ethnically Jewish and openly bisexual. Though I am a white-passing, cis-gendered man, I am diametrically opposed to white supremacists and their beliefs. I am also a musician who primarily plays hardcore music like metal and punk. In spite of my own involvement with the genre, I have generally avoided certain subgenres, including the two I am discussing here, because of their associations with racists, anti-semites and homophobes. I felt that, if I am to continue as I am, I would at some point need to confront, reckon with or gain a deeper understanding of how a person like myself could share aesthetic and musical interests with the kinds of people who forced my great-grandmother to flee Europe under threats of genocide. This paper is a part of that pursuit.

A Brief History of Skinhead Punk

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Britain experienced an influx of immigration from Jamaica and various other countries in the Caribbean. These immigrants, settling in the United Kingdom between 1948 and 1971, became known as the Windrush

Generation, named after the HMT *Empire Windrush,* the ship which carried the first group of these immigrants (just over a thousand people) to London in 1948 ("Story of the Windrush"). By the late-60s, interaction between these Caribbean immigrants and white, working class London youths gave rise to the subculture that would eventually become known as skinhead.

Skinhead grew out of another, early-60s UK subculture called "mod," which was centered around stylish fashion, upward economic mobility and listening to American soul and jazz music. As mod culture grew in popularity, it was increasingly commodified; a schism grew between its claims of subversiveness and its blatant capitalist potential. In response to this, some mods began to focus on the working class and proletarian aspects of mod fashion, opting to wear heavy boots, jeans and short-cropped hair rather than the jazz-inspired suits and hippy-inspired long hair of earlier mods (Brown 157-158). Although there were several other names for these new mods at the time, including "peanuts" or "hard mods," their extremely short-cropped hair became recognizable as their distinctive feature, giving rise to the term "skinhead" (*Story of the Skinhead* 0:00-5:00; Brown 157-158).

Mod culture had already had a deep appreciation for the music of black Americans, but these new skinheads sought inspiration from black culture closer to home: the ska and reggae of their Jamaican neighbors and coworkers. Alongside the music, skinheads sought to adopt elements of fashion from "rude boys," counterculture youths from the poor areas of the Jamaican city of Kingston, whose style of dress was clean-cut but without the fancy, high-society aspirations that earlier mods had (Brown 157-159; Dyck 15-16). This led skinheads to adopt a look that combined utilitarian, proletarian fashion with a sharper, collegiate look (*Story of the Skinhead* 3:00-9:00).

The growing skinhead subculture was explicitly the result of multicultural, working class cooperation, with skinheads providing a ready audience for Jamaican music and active appreciation for Jamaican and African American culture. As Timothy S. Brown puts it in his article on skinhead's origins, "The identity of the original skinhead was…constructed in dialogue with black immigrants and organized around music created by black performers" (159).

By the early 1970s skinhead culture in London itself had begun to die out. However, the subculture had by this time spread out to the north, allowing it to persist in other areas of the UK despite a decrease in popularity. Football played a significant role in this proliferation, as skinhead and non-skinhead fans from different regions encountered one another in the audiences of games. The rowdy and often aggressive behavior of the young football fans of the time bled into the skinhead subculture, giving skinheads a reputation as street-brawlers and hooligans. In addition, this movement outside of London brought the subculture away from the area where most Jamaican immigrants actually lived. Going forward, white skinheads generally had far less direct interaction with the people who had inspired their way of life (*Story of the Skinhead* 13:00-16:00).

In the late 1970s skinhead experienced a transformative revival through the influence of punk rock. Alongside this revival came the political schism that somewhat defines the genre today, with non-racist skinheads who value the subculture's multicultural roots on one side and white supremacist skinheads on the other. Left-wing and non-racist skinheads generally gravitated towards 2-tone ska, whereas far-right skinheads generally gravitated towards oi!, a newer genre named after a popular cockney greeting that was chanted at concerts as a kind of audience sing-along (Brown 161).[1] However, neither genre followed this political divide explicitly, and non-racist oi! bands existed in addition to racist ones. 2-tone ska was, as the name

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[1] The use of oi! as a name for the genre was coined by Gary Bushnell in 1980 (Brown 161).

implies, a development on the genre of ska, incorporating elements of punk music and often having explicitly left-wing political subjects, such as encouraging multiculturalism (Brown 158). Oi! as a genre has far more overt punk trappings and less influence from ska or reggae (notably, lacking any of the telltale rhythms generally associated with Jamaican music) and as such had much less influence from black culture in general (Brown 158; Dyck 16-17; *Story of the Skinhead*).

The subculture's fashion changed as well, with more extreme, militaristic fashion being associated with oi! and, by extension, with the far-right branch of skinhead. Tall boots and military-surplus jackets became commonplace, and visible tattoos gained popularity (Dyck 17). Apolitical and left-leaning skinheads, by comparison, continued to wear the sleek, utilitarian and working-class fashion of the older generation of skinheads: Harrington jackets, polo shirts, blue jeans, suspenders and work boots (Dyck 16; Brown 158-159). Because of this split, fashion became an easily recognized symbol of one's political beliefs within the subculture.

Around this time, the most notorious far-right skinhead band rose to prominence: Skrewdriver, founded by white supremacist Ian Stuart Donaldson. Neither Donaldson nor the other members of the band were skinheads when they first gained popularity; they had started as a Rolling Stones cover band called the Tumbling Dice before morphing into a more mainstream-styled punk band and adopting the name Skrewdriver. It was only after receiving a public, London-wide ban on their performances (due to excessive violence both during and after their shows) that Donaldson began to get involved with the skinhead scene. Around the same time, he also got involved with the National Front (NF), a fascist political party in Britain. Clashes between Skrewdriver fans and other skinheads became increasingly common, with

vocally anti-racist artists like Sham '69 finding audiences at their concerts frequently devolving into bloody brawls (Dyck 14-16).

This violence reached its peak on July 3, 1981 during what became known as the Southall Riot. The riot began at the Hambrough Tavern, a popular venue for oi! bands located in London's Southall suburb. This area was near the city's Little India district, home to a large population of people of South Asian descent. A large group of these South Asian residents protested outside the tavern in response to a series of racially-motivated crimes regarding the tavern, including the attempted banning of entry by non-white patrons; the distribution of racist pamphlets by concert goers; the violent assault of several members of the nearby immigrant community; and the death of a schoolteacher named Blair Peach in a street brawl in the area in 1979. During the protest, skinhead punks attacked the protestors, and in the ensuing violence the Hambrough Tavern was burned to the ground and over a hundred people were injured (Dyck 18; Brown 162).

Following the violence in Southall, the mainstream media's portrayal of skinheads as aggressive, racist thugs caused the general public to condemn practically everyone associated with the subculture. Many older generation non-racist skinheads abandoned the subculture altogether, having no desire to be associated with white supremacists. The British government began to crack down on publicly-known oi! performances and record labels began dropping oi! bands. Without mainstream support, white supremacist skinheads were forced to turn inwards to continue producing music, establishing White Noise Records (with support of the National Front) and Blood and Honour (founded by Ian Stuart Donaldson and named after a slogan used by the Hitler Youth) (Dyck 18-20).

In the late 1980s, Donaldson and his associated organizations began trying to build white power music movements outside of the UK. Skrewdriver toured around northern Europe,

primarily Germany and Scandinavia, where they became associated with Rock-O-Rama records, a German distribution company that helped Donaldson spread his white-supremacist messaging. However, even with their own labels and their connections outside of Britain, nationalist skinheads were unable to achieve the level of public renown and financial success they had previously had. After Donaldson's death in a car accident in 1993, infighting amongst other white supremacist skinheads further crippled the movement (Dyck 21-30). Without clear leadership or access to mainstream distribution methods, the decline of oi! left a gap in the world of white supremacist music. A gap which, thanks in part to Donaldson's efforts to establish white power scenes outside of the UK, would soon be filled by National Socialist black metal.

A Brief History of Black Metal

Black metal originally developed in the early 1980s, having evolved out of the earlier so-called New Wave of British Heavy Metal during the 1970s. This era of metal was largely a reaction to the UK's '73-'75 economic recession, in which a large number of predominantly white, working class men turned to music as a means of making a living. Like punk music from the same era, 70s heavy metal musicians and audiences were largely disillusioned with existing power structures. However, unlike punk, which sought to directly criticize and confront those power structures, metal sought to provide escapism; as such, many songs from the time describe fantasies or myths, while others describe the hard rock lifestyle of the musicians themselves (Tucker 20-25). Because the music's associated subculture was largely white and male, the aesthetics of both audiences and performers tended towards celebrations of masculinity and masculine stereotypes, although this generally did not manifest as an overt or explicit hatred towards perceived non-masculinity (i.e. manifesting as misogyny or homophobia) (Bayer 18-25).

Black metal's unofficial origin point as a subgenre is widely considered to be the release of the band Venom's second album in 1982, *Black Metal*, from which the genre took its name. Two years later came the release of a second foundational album for the genre, the first and self-titled album by the Swedish band Bathory. Together, these two albums established many of the musical and aesthetic tropes that still define the genre today (Dyck 57). Foremost among these is the genre's subject matter, with lyrics generally portraying satanism, paganism, witchcraft or other anti-Christian religious imagery, often mixed with misanthropic rhetoric and tinged with the same kind of escapist fantasy as other kinds of heavy metal. Both albums were recorded in low-budget, DIY circumstances, giving them a raw and noisy sound uncommon in more mainstream genres (Ekeroth; "Complete History of Venom"). This low-fidelity recording style eventually became a staple of the genre's sound, with later artists often deliberately opting for cheaper, lower-quality recording tools and techniques even when better versions were available.

The members of Venom and Bathory also utilized stage names, a practice which became very popular in the genre going forward. More specifically, artists often choose names that are inspired by or reminiscent of myths, legends, folklore and fiction (examples being "Cronos," the frontman of Venom, and "Quorthon," the founder of Bathory). Although not adopted universally, a large percentage of black metal musicians have since used these as a way to reinforce the fantasies that they seek to portray through their performances. The kinds of names used for bands, record labels, albums and songs generally follow similar aesthetics, referencing or evoking the darker aspects of history and fantasy.

Much like its parent genre, eras of black metal are often referred to as "waves," with bands like Venom and Bathory forming the first wave. The second wave came in the 1990s, and

was centered around a collection of Norwegian bands. This era of black metal is most notorious for the controversies surrounding the members of the band Mayhem and their associates, although they and their contemporaries brought a number of meaningful developments to the genre. These changes, and the way they affected the subculture, should be discussed before addressing that particularly infamous series of events. A number of these developments were regarding the performing aesthetics of black metal bands, which now sought to create explicit symbols of death and decay. A style of black-and-white face makeup called "corpse paint" became popular, named so for its intent to make the wearer appear undead or deathly ill. Some artists, like Mayhem's Pelle Ohlin (aka Dead) took this pursuit of the aesthetics of death further, performing in clothes that had been buried and left to rot for days prior to the concert. Ohlin would also engage in performative violence, cutting himself on stage and deliberately bleeding on audience members (Godfrey). The aesthetics of death and decay began to permeate throughout the scene, though most artists opted for fake blood rather than the extreme performative violence Ohlin engaged in (Dyck 57).

Ohlin's self-harm was a symptom not only of his own mental health issues, but also of a larger push within Norwegian black metal scene towards "being extreme." This affected nearly all aspects of both genre and subculture, taking the basic elements handed down from British heavy metal and making them harder, sharper or uglier. Black metal fashion accentuated leather and metal, with belts and wristbands adorned with steel spikes (Dyck 57). Long, black, poorly maintained hair was (and still is) the norm for most fans and artists invested in the scene. The music became both increasingly atmospheric and increasingly grinding and abrasive, with pounding, repetitive drums and heavily distorted guitars soaked in reverb. The low-fidelity recording practices, done due to budget concerns by the first wave of bands, were now sought

deliberately by the second wave. Mayhem's bassist, Varg Vikernes (stage name Count Grishnackh, birth name Kristian Vikernes and current legal name Louis Cachet), at one point deliberately sought out the worst microphone available when recording the first album for his solo project, Burzum (Vikernes). Songs were designed to be a loud, cold wall of noise (Godfrey). Musical themes followed the same progression towards the extreme, taking the performative satanist and anti-Christian themes of the earlier bands to places of explicit misanthropy. Nearly everything about the genre was intentionally designed to be unacceptable to mainstream audiences in order to maintain a small and elitist subculture (Dyck 57).

It was only a matter of time, of course, before this push towards the extreme inevitably led some musicians into extremist politics. Vikernes, who I mentioned a moment ago, is a notorious racist and anti-semite. Others in the scene, including Mayhem's guitarist, Øysten Aarseth (aka Euronymous), began to espouse a kind of esoteric neo-Nazism, taking black metal's satanist themes and mixing them with Third-Reich-era Nazi occultism. One aspect of this included an extension of the subculture's anti-Christianity into anti-Judaism as well, viewing it as Christianity's originator. Christianity is, by this anti-semitic logic, merely a derivative arm of Judaism, and as such is worthy of the same derision (Goodrick-Clarke 204-205; Dyck 59).

Aarseth, Vikernes and their fellow neo-Nazi musicians congregated at a record shop called Helvete (Norwegian for Hell), which Aarseth owned, and called themselves the Black Circle. This shop had become a cornerstone of the subculture prior to the radicalization of the musicians who frequented it, and that influence is part of the reason why others followed along with the scene's political shift (Dyck 58; Godfrey). As the subculture's push towards all things extreme continued and far-right politics began to spread amongst the subculture's members, their

performative evil soon stopped being entirely performative. Ultimately, neither their music nor their extremist beliefs are what these musicians are most famous for.

In 1991, Pelle Ohlin killed himself via gunshot. Øysten Aarseth was the one who found his bandmate's body. He took photographs and collected bits of Ohlin's skull and brain, which he distributed to other musicians in the scene "as an apparent sign of respect," disgusting many of them (Dyck 59). Mayhem's original bassist, Jørn Stubberud (aka Necrobutcher), quit the band because of this. Aarseth's record shop became increasingly popular as the rumors spread, leading to a reported inflating of Aarseth's ego and a jealousy among his peers (Godfrey).

On July 6, 1992, the historical Fantoft Stave Church in Bergen was burned down. The Norwegian authorities suspected Varg Vikernes, but were unable to gather sufficient evidence to convict him in court at that time. However, Vikernes has made several statements about the arson, both around the time it happened and in the years since, strongly implying his own involvement. Vikernes also used an image of the church's remains as the cover art for Burzum's 1993 album *Aske* (meaning Ashes in Norwegian). More church burnings followed in the subsequent months, three of which Vikernes was eventually convicted for (Godfrey; Dyck 60-61).

A month after the destruction of the Fantoft church, a gay man was murdered in Olympic Park in Lillehammer. The murderer was Bård Eithun (aka Faust), another member of the Black Circle and the drummer of the band Emperor. The victim, Magne Andreassen, had been drunk and reportedly made sexual advances towards Eithun. In response, Eithun stabbed Andreassen 37 times. The next day, Eithun, Aarseth and Vikernes burned down another church in Holmenkollen after Eithun told the others about his crime (Godfrey).

The three remained at large for a little over a year, though their relationships began to disintegrate. Vikernes and Aarseth had a falling out over financing and royalties on Vikernes' first Burzum album, which he had released through Deathlike Silence Productions, a record label founded by Aarseth (Godfrey; Dyck 60-61). Aarseth had borrowed money from Vikernes to print the records, but failed to actually do so. Vikernes established an opposing record company in response named Cymophane Records (Dyck 60). Aarseth began making death threats towards Vikernes, although other musicians in the scene (including Stubberud) have claimed that these threats may have just been performative. Regardless of whether Aarseth was really planning to kill him or not, Vikernes acted first. On August 10, 1993, Vikernes stabbed Aarseth 23 times outside Aarseth's apartment, killing him (Godfrey). Both Vikernes and Eithun were arrested and convicted of their respective murders and arsons, with Vikernes sentenced to 21 years and Eithun sentenced to 14. Neither served their full sentences and have both since been released (Dyck 60). Both have continued their musical careers.

In spite of their criminal controversy (or perhaps because of it), the members of the Black Circle had a wildly influential effect on black metal as a genre. The sounds and aesthetics of the second wave bands are still the predominant defining aspects of the broader genre and its subculture today. Because of this, it's often difficult to determine the political leanings of an artist just from their music alone, as different subgenres all utilize very similar musical tropes; aside from examples with obvious tells in their lyrics, names or artwork, non-political black metal, left-wing black metal (often called Red and Anarchist Black Metal, or RABM) and far-right black metal are generally all musically similar. It's common to find discussion about a band's politics on forums such as RateYourMusic or Reddit, where the RABM subreddit has a permanent pinned thread called "Is [X] Sketch?" in which users discuss whether specific bands

are politically trustworthy or not. Some bands make it easier to tell than others, like the Greek band Der Stürmer, whose lyrics are explicitly fascist and whose name is taken from a Third Reich-era anti-Semitic German newspaper; others make official statements, either in interviews or through social media, about their political stances, generally claiming to be apolitical or, at the very least, stating that they are not an NSBM band. For example, in 2021 the Ukrainian band 1914 posted an image stating, "fuck nsbm and all nazi shit," to their official Facebook page in response to someone asking them if they are NSBM. Of course, nothing stops NSBM bands from making these statements as well; Bård Eithun, for example, has denied ever being a fascist, despite his past associations and criminal conviction (Blood Tsunami).

The point of these examples is to illustrate that, even amongst those invested in the scene, there is a great deal of wariness regarding people's politics because of the genre's associations with extremism. As I stated in the introduction of this paper, I have myself experienced this wariness for quite some time. Among those who are not invested in black metal or adjacent kinds of hardcore music, whose only knowledge of the genre could be the harshness of its sound or a vague understanding of the criminal controversy of the 90s, this wariness may be even greater.

How Fascists Came to Define These Genres

Before I begin this analysis, it is important to discuss the sociological concept of subcultural capital, as it serves as an important lens through which to view some of these events. The term was coined in 1995 by sociologist Sarah Thornton who defines it as "the knowledge of the scene, possession of relevant physical objects, appearance through style, and perceived commitment or longevity of identification with the scene" (qtd. in Galanek et al). In other words, it is the combination of things or deeds that a person will pursue, perform and/or possess in order

to gain clout or portray authenticity to other members of their chosen subculture. The specific criteria of these things and deeds may be largely arbitrary, may vary within a given scene, and may change over time. Furthermore, the pursuit of these things may not be done consciously or may come as secondary to the pursuit of clout and/or authenticity that these things will confer.

Throughout this section, I will draw on the historical events I've discussed in the previous two sections in order to elaborate on how those events may have contributed to the growth of fascism within hardcore music. As such, this section is structured in parallel with those previous two, discussing skinhead and black metal in succession. I must also reiterate that this analysis is meant to discuss how the white supremacist factions grew within the subculture, not how they appeared within the scene initially. Subcultures are not homogenous entities, and it is not possible to delineate a specific point in time where the scene's racist sentiment began in a literal sense. A scene may contain racist people without being defined by them; those people may have been racist before, during and after their involvement in the scene, and their involvement does not necessarily mean that the scene itself is racist. The purpose of this section is to analyze how, little by little, the influence of racist members of these subcultures increased until the scene became defined by their presence.

Within the skinhead subculture, one factor contributing to this growth was geographic. As the first wave of skinheads in London became less involved with the scene and it experienced a revival in other parts of Britain, where populations of Jamaican immigrants were fewer and further between, the scene began to lose the most tangible connection to its multicultural roots. Without that connection, the sentiments of broader racist stigmas within British society became more prevalent within the scene. According to a number of interviews contained within Don Letts' *The Story of the Skinhead*, racism was simply "a fact of life" in Britain during the 1960s

and 1970s (11:00). While the majority of early skinheads were not openly racist towards their

Jamaican comrades, they were still surrounded by racist sentiment from family, teachers and

media. In some cases, a lack of racism towards Jamaicans was the exception, not the rule. One

particular interview with a group of teenage skinheads reveals that they "get along well" with

Jamaicans, but not with Pakistanis (12:00-12:35). The interviewees refer to Pakistanis as

"Pakis," a racial slur that has historically been used against not only Pakistanis but broader

groups of South Asian immigrants as well.[2] Furthermore, while they do not say the name

specifically, these skinheads allude to violence against Pakistanis as a kind of racist pastime; this

pastime was common enough to have its own name, with the aforementioned racial slur

included. This so-called "Paki-bashing" was often done alongside "Queer-bashing," a roughly

identical violent pastime targeting LGBTQ people (Dyck 16). Given this, it seems reasonable to

conclude that, after the scene moved away from areas with large Jamaican populations, broader

systemic racist beliefs would return to being the norm amongst newer skinheads.

In addition to racist sentiments, other social stigmas seem to have had effects on the

skinhead scene as well. One such stigma is the stereotype of young, working class men as violent

hooligans. In part, this stereotype spawned from genuine acts of violence, some examples being

the aforementioned racist and homophobic violence, as well as the brawls that would often break

out at football games. At the time, brawls were seen as a part of football culture, where fans of a

particular team felt they needed to fight one another in order to promote or defend their team's

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[2] To elaborate on my use of this slur: I had initially been averse to including it, and to instead talk about this racist violence without naming it. However, I felt that the slur's existence, and its role in the name for this violence, was itself a powerful demonstration of the extent and commonality of this violence. Furthermore, I felt that not including it could potentially serve to lend the word greater power, as well as being rhetorically unclear. The approach I have ultimately taken was taken after consulting with two ethnomusicologists with more experience than I, although I would still like to apologize if it causes offense to any readers and assure you that I will not be using it beyond this paragraph.

supremacy (*Story of the Skinhead* 15:00-18:00). As more and more football fans started to join the skinhead subculture, they carried this idea and its associations with them across subcultures.

However, football culture was not the source of this aggression. A number of explanations are possible: skinhead Roddy Moreno claims that it may be an effect of an instinctual drive to establish a hierarchy through strength (*Story of the Skinhead* 16:24), while others believe it may have been caused by frustration with financial difficulties (Dyck 14, 16), social disenfranchisement or personal unresolved trauma (Simi). I believe a combination of these, and others, seems to be the most logical cause: young, working class men struggle to make ends meet and live comfortably, which eventually leads them to question the structure of the society that they struggle under. Realizing that they may not have any way to improve their financial stability, they become frustrated and angry at their situation and at their society, but lack the ability to take out this frustration in a meaningful way. As they search for comradery and an ability to express or release this frustration, they align themselves with and against particular football teams, redirecting their anger towards more tangible opponents. Another interviewee from Lett's documentary claims that football games further facilitated this release of frustration and aggression by being the only place you could go "on a Saturday or Sunday, scream and shout obscenities, threaten people, and not get arrested" (*Story of the Skinhead* 16:50).

Financial frustration and social disenfranchisement also left these young people open to recruitment by political groups like the National Front (NF), who were more than willing to offer an alternative target for this aggression in the form of immigrants and non-whites. NF recruiters actively recruited outside of football matches and skinhead concerts, selling their newspaper and handing out pamphlets. Additionally, the NF would deny entry to non-members looking to get into venues they owned, including a popular disco club, leading to recruitment of those who

otherwise had no interest in the party's politics (*Story of the Skinhead* 21:00). As the recruitment

of skinheads continued, National Front leadership shaped their aggression towards the party's

own ends and began to view them as "paramilitary irregulars," thugs to be used in street fights,

riots and brawls (Goodrick-Clarke 194). This partly coincided with the revitalization of the

subculture through punk and the increasingly militarized aesthetic of skinhead fashion. As a

result, this newer variant of skinhead fashion and music was seen as being more closely

associated with far-right politics when compared to the older style (Brown 158-159).

The influence of punk on the skinhead subculture was itself another contributor to the

growing number of white supremacists therein due to crossovers between the counterculture

ideology of punk and the perceived racial victimhood of white supremacist ideologies. A

common belief amongst fascists is that those in power (usually believed to be the Jews) are

oppressing the white race by promoting the rights and cultures of non-whites. Mitch Berbrier, in

the introduction to his article on the subject, identifies five common themes within this belief:

whites are the victims of discrimination; this discrimination takes the form of the removal of

their rights; the media and broader public stigmatize whites for expressing "racial pride"; this

additionally impacts white people psychologically through a loss of self esteem; and that the end

goal of all of this is the elimination of "the white race." Furthermore, these beliefs always

calculate justice and oppression ahistorically; modern programs like affirmative action or

reparation payments, intended to right historical wrongs, are seen as wrongs themselves because

they are happening contemporarily. White supremacists disregard past systems of oppression and

exploitation, and in doing so view the world through a lens in which "the histories of all cultural

groups are seen in broad strokes as substantially similar" (Berbrier 182). As genuine histories of

oppression are disregarded in their totality, white supremacists imagine a false reality in which

systems like affirmative action are designed to place non-white peoples and cultures above whites, instead of being designed to allow non-whites access to opportunities they have historically been denied.

Because of this belief, many white supremacists believe themselves to be punks by default, as their ideology is naturally opposed to what they believe existing power structures and social norms to be, regardless of the fact that in most cases these beliefs are exaggerated, inaccurate or simply wrong. Punk is made more favorable due to its generally very masculine aesthetics, meaning that those among the far-right who additionally believe in strict, stereotypical and traditional gender roles would rather adopt the aesthetics of this subculture rather than, for example, the aesthetics of the hippy movement. Punk's popularity amongst working-class youths served as another open doorway, as the existing frustration and opposition to current social structures I discussed earlier could easily be given specific, actionable direction by white supremacist beliefs. As Berbrier puts it:

> The notion [of racial victimhood]…can be very attractive to young whites… perhaps especially to those who do not possess the elementary historical or sociological knowledge to recognize the implications of an historically privileged position, and who (at least mong the middle- and upper-class whites) have been specifically trained not to see how their advantaged upbringing might relate to their success in life. (188)

Without the power or knowledge to fight for genuine social change, those discontented with their life can be convinced to place the blame for that discontent upon others in similar (or worse) positions. In doing so, fascist political parties like the National Front turn those who could be their enemies into loyal soldiers, who are convinced that they are fighting for better conditions

for themselves; in reality, they are being used to reinforce and maintain the very power structures they are suffering under.

I would prefer it if my use of the word "fighting" just now were metaphorical, but sadly it is not. Though many white supremacists do not resort to violence, there are also many who do, as was the case in the Southall Riots. Highly publicized acts of politically motivated violence such as this often lead to condemnation by the public and the mainstream media, as was the case with the skinhead subculture. In this case, the subculture became almost synonymous with white supremacist violence in the public consciousness; my personal experience with it for most of my life was exactly that. This kind of condemnation can have a number of effects: first, those already staunchly invested in the white victimhood mentality I've just discussed may double down on those beliefs. White supremacists commonly believe the mainstream media to be owned and controlled by Jews and is used as another tool of their oppression. Therefore, some may perceive this condemnation as confirmation that what they are doing is angering those imagined oppressors, encouraging them to continue to take similar violent actions. Second, non-right wing members of the subculture are placed under political and public-facing social pressure which may affect their willingness or ability to remain within the subculture; after the Southall Riots, non-racist skinheads were forced to take political stances or else risk others assuming them to be violent racists. Some formed Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (or SHARP) in 1987, an organization that is explicitly anti-racist and pro-multiculturalism, while others simply left the subculture altogether (Dyck; *Story of the Skinhead*). Third, by labeling and condemning the entire subculture, any genuine, accurate or actionable criticism of existing power structures made by non-fascist members of the scene can be portrayed as being associated with violent racism, and as such disregarded as dangerous or unacceptable. Media in the United States does this

frequently, such as during the recent Black Lives Matter protests, where a significant amount of

news coverage focused on a small number of acts of arson and vandalism in order to paint the

entire movement as criminal instead of addressing the very real police brutality that people were

protesting. A poll conducted by NPR in December of 2020 revealed that 47% of all participants

believed that the majority of the George Floyd protests were violent, with an additional 16%

reporting that were unsure if there was violence or not (Rose); a separate study verified that, in

reality, only about 5% of the protests held that summer involved injuries, arrests or property

damage (Craig). These three effects, taken together, can lead to sudden changes in the dominant

or public-facing political beliefs of a group of people as the group's reputation becomes its

defining characteristic; those who do not want to be associated with that reputation leave, while

those who do double down or join (perhaps despite having no interest in the group prior).

Because of this, events like the Southall Riots can mark a point in a subculture's history where it

becomes defined by its politics, rather than by its culture.

The crimes committed by the members of the Black Circle acted as a similar point for

black metal. The actual music which the subculture was built around quickly became a

secondary aspect to it, with violence and hatred taking its place as the first thing many people

thought of in regards to the genre (Kelly). The fact that the genre's aesthetics were steeped in

violent and edgy imagery may have served a similar function for black metal that stereotypes

regarding hooliganism served for skinhead; expectations of violence encouraged actual violent

acts, and those actual violent acts served to strengthen those expectations of violence.

While there are a number of similarities between the processes by which these two

subcultures reached this point, there are a great deal of differences as well. The first of these is

the form in which the idea of racial victimhood manifested. Whereas skinhead's approach was

targeted towards modern immigrants, black metal's approach was one of historical revisionism. NSBM musicians paint white Europeans of the past, predominantly Vikings, as having been noble warriors under assault by "foreign hordes" and "multiracial chaos," to quote Der Stürmer's song "Heathen Terrormachine." In doing so, they adopt the persona of members of an oppressed civilization, terrorized by foreign colonial powers. In reality, of course, the Vikings were themselves a colonial power; they are perhaps most well known today for having been raiders and pirates, who traveled far and wide and willingly engaged with the peoples of northern Africa, western Asia and North America, wherein live the "foreign hordes" modern white supremacists rail against. Though the specific rhetoric around it is slightly different, this revisionism is in many ways identical to the ways in which the Third-Reich-era Nazis discussed the hypothetical Aryan ubermensch, imagining an ancient, ancestral glory that has somehow been tainted or lost to time due to the influence of lesser men. Although it is an obvious fantasy for the modern white supremacist, it implies the presence of that same desire for an improvement to one's personal life that led skinheads to resort to racial violence. Imagined glory is more enticing than an unsatisfying reality.

Although this historical revisionism is prevalent in modern NSBM, it was not as present during the Black Circle's time. However, a number of black metal's earlier aesthetic values appear to have allowed this belief to prosper, similarly to the way that punk's counterculture aesthetics did. Chief among these are the subculture's strong religious views. The anti-Christian rhetoric, done performatively for shock value by early black metal bands, became one of the only aspects of NSBM's historical narrative with any genuine historical weight. Christianity is, at the moment, far more popular than the traditional Norse and pagan religions, and it did in fact originate from a foreign land. To many, like Varg Vikernes, this fact forms a core tenet of their

white supremacist beliefs and is why many of them refer to themselves as "heathens" or "pagans," like in the title of the aforementioned song by Der Stürmer. Furthermore, anti-Christianity is often elaborated on as anti-Judaism as well, as the Abrahamic religions are generally clumped together as all being derivative of the Jewish faith. Therefore, Christians and Muslims are also Jews, and the spread of Christianity into Scandinavia is seen as yet another arm of the global Jewish conspiracy. Anti-Islamic sentiments, while present within black metal, are less common than anti-Christian sentiments, and they often manifest more as racial hatred than religious hatred, due to Islam's popularity amongst non-whites. These sentiments are also generally targeted towards modern immigration rather than historic immigration and tend to make up a specific facet of the fearmongering surrounding the idea of the "foreign horde" (Buesnel; Vikernes).

Regardless of whether any adherence to old Norse religious practices is genuine or not, these white supremacists at least engage with it performatively. Since his release from prison, Vikernes has made it clear through his online persona that he wants to be perceived as a true Viking, even going so far as to have the cover image for his online autobiography be an image of himself in chainmail and a spangenhelm,[3] armed with a spear. Throughout his own writings, both within the autobiography and across his many now-banned social media accounts, Vikernes repeatedly espouses traditionalist values through this lens, often alongside unabashed racism and anti-semitism. These are all, of course, quite literally Nazi talking points, derived very directly from occultist, Jews-as-literal-demons rhetoric utilized by Hitler and his propagandists. Though some of the details have evolved, the core principles and ideas remain the same (Goodrick-Clarke 204-205).

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[3] A kind of medieval German helmet sometimes associated with Vikings.

In addition to the existing anti-Christian sentiments of earlier black metal, the subculture's drive to "be extreme" is another primary reason as to why these politics became so popular. As I discussed in an earlier section, members of the Black Circle and the broader black metal scene engaged in consistent one-upmanship in order to prove their commitment to and authenticity within the subculture. This came about in part because of a broad desire by members of the subculture to keep the scene small and elitist. In pursuit of this, they fostered music and aesthetics that were largely unappealing or unacceptable to mainstream audiences (Dyck 57). The push towards extremism in all things may have been designed to weed out those uncommitted to the scene, but with no established limits as to how extreme was extreme enough, even those who had already proved themselves sought to prove themselves even further. Part of the subcultural capital required to be seen as an authentic member of the scene became a competition with other authentic members, and failure to do so would have resulted in rejection by those other members.

Bård Eithun claims to have never been a fascist, but the situation is more complicated than that statement makes it seem. It's entirely possible he never genuinely believed in the extremist politics of his fellow Black Circle members, but adopted them because the drive towards extremism became a part of the subculture itself. By not adopting them he would have risked ejection from the subculture and a possible loss of his career. In his work interviewing white supremacists, Pete Simi has found that ideology is not always the initial draw for people to join white supremacist groups, and even when it is important, those beliefs are not always shared in their entirety by all members. He says, for example, "Some of these folks talk about how much they had bought into hating black people but never really understood or identified with the anti-Semitism, so they would just go along with that part." For someone in Eithun's position,

where the extremist beliefs had risen to prominence around him rather than having been an established thing about the group he chose to join, it seems safe to conclude that the draw to "just go along with that part" would be even stronger.

Within both punk and metal subcultures, stereotypes regarding gender roles have also played a part in the expansion of political extremism. The behavior expected from members of either scene tends towards the stereotypically hypermasculine in most examples, such as with the performative gore, violence and edginess that Mayhem employed prior to their criminal era. Fashion follows masculine tropes as well, with pants and jackets made primarily of denim or leather. The specifics vary from subgenre to subgenre, but the fashion aesthetics of skinhead punk and black metal which I discussed in the earlier sections of this paper are not exceptions to this generalization of masculinity.

Fascists and white supremacists believe that traditional gender roles should be the only gender roles: that a man's role is to be the family's strong provider and that a woman's role is to be the family's gentle caregiver, and that deviation from either stereotype in any way (such as, for example, having a family with two fathers) is a form of degeneracy. As such, the masculinity of these subcultures and its performative role within them could have served as an attractor to fascist men seeking a space where they can be performatively hypermasculine.[4] It's curious, however, that while women have always been an active part of these scenes, they are generally expected to dress more or less the same as the men. Traditionally feminine clothing, like dresses, are a rare sight at metal and punk shows. In dressing this way, women in the scene are implicitly denying the gender roles that fascists would place upon them. I believe that this apparent

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[4] I will elaborate on this more in the final section of this paper, when discussing how this performative masculinity functions as a recruitment tool.

phenomenon is deserving of further investigation, but such an investigation is beyond the scope of this particular paper.[5]

Interestingly, there is a popular example of hyperfemininity within white supremacist hate music which helps to show the other side of the coin. However, since she is not a punk or metal musician, I will keep the discussion of her brief. Lina Saga Carolina Erikson (who goes by the stage name Saga) is a Swedish white nationalist pop singer-songwriter. Whereas fascist punk and metal musicians often portray themselves as the strong and noble saviors of the white race, Saga instead portrays herself as an example of what those men are supposed to be saving. She portrays herself as a weak and gentle person who is under attack by multiculturalism and progressive values, fulfilling the exact same gender stereotypes from the other side (Teitelbaum).

Many modern examples of NSBM and skinhead punk are explicit in their representation of what they believe men and women should be. The historical revisionism of Vikings is one such example; one facet of this fantasy is often the perception that men were somehow manlier back in those days, and that multiculturalism is somehow to blame for the loss of that manliness. It paints the ideal white man as being akin to the men of this fantasy: noble and sophisticated, but also rugged and strong. At the same time, it paints non-whites as the opposite: destroyers of sophistication and strength. Ideologically, this also often goes hand in hand with explicit homophobia, despite the fact that there has been a substantive history of closeted queer people within the far-right portions of these subcultures (Dyck 22-24) and within far-right groups on a broader scale (Statham; "Gay Aryan Nations Members"). I personally feel there is at least one very simple explanation for this: being a gay man is, in reality, not in any way directly synonymous with lacking masculinity or being feminine. In many cases, gay men portray

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[5] Benjamin Teitelbaum's article on Saga discussed below touches upon this, though it is not the article's main focus. The reference pages for that article may provide some additional readings for those interested.

themselves (or are attracted to men who portray themselves) as extremely masculine. A group that openly celebrates that kind of masculinity would naturally draw in people with that attraction. Shelby Statham identifies this kind of white supremacist as a "Substandard Ally:" a person who, while still viewed as lesser than their heterenormative peers, can nonetheless be treated as a nationalist ally so long as they distance themselves from LGBT culture and enforce gender stereotypes in aspects other than their sexuality. There is much more that could be said about this phenomenon in far-right politics at large, but again, such discussion is beyond the scope of this particular paper.

Though I have at this point given a number of specific reasons as to why the fascist presence grew within these genres, I believe most of them attest to a basic principle: most people want a community that they fit in with and the ability to live a contented and/or meaningful life, and fascists will actively exploit those desires towards their own ends. They recruit by (among other ways) convincing people that a contented life could only be found in an ethnically segregated world, and that the pursuit of that segregation is itself a struggle that can give your life meaning. Skinhead and black metal both began as subcultures made up primarily of poor and working-class young people, who sought solidarity with each other when society abroad could not help them live a contented life. Some of the people who felt this frustration with the failures of their social systems were then harnessed by existing far-right groups like the National Front, who directed it into racism, homophobia and anti-semitism by conflating hatred of and violence towards those things with the fight to improve social systems. At the same time, recruiters offered a broader community ("the white race") that the recruitee could always be a part of simply by virtue of being white. As these nationalist sentiments grew in popularity, those who did not share them (but wanted to remain a part of the group with which they had found

solidarity) were forced to choose to either perform a belief in those politics or to fight against them. Over time, as these politics were reported on and acts of politically-motivated violence were committed, the perception of these subcultures became defined by their politics rather than any musical or aesthetic facet of their culture.

Skinhead and Black Metal as Tools for Fascist Propaganda and Recruitment

For people like myself, who are involved in the modern punk and metal scenes but want to fight back against the fascist presence therein, it's important that we are able to recognize examples of hate music when we encounter them, especially in genres like black metal where it is easy for white supremacists to blend in. Though I have by this point already discussed some of the ways in which hate music is used to express extremist beliefs, as well as some reasons as to why this may be appealing to certain people, I believe further elaboration is necessary in order to convey a sense of what, specifically, we should look for as red flags. Though many of these red flags are obvious, others are not.

Some of the most obvious examples are actions taken by artists that have little or nothing to do with their actual music, or those for which the music is merely a setting or circumstance rather than a part of the propaganda itself. The Southall Riot is an example of what I mean by this; though it was loosely tied to actual music through the inciting events at the Hambrough Tavern and the skinheads who partook in the violence, the rioters did not utilize music for any significant purpose during the riot itself. The Black Circle's burning of churches falls into this category as well. The people enacting these acts of violence were connected to each other through their shared musical and subcultural involvement, but their status as musicians (or music fans) was not a defining characteristic of their extremist actions.

Other times, artists have used their music as a vehicle for reactionary actions. In these cases, the music is often still secondary to the political actions or motivations, but forms an integral part of the specific way that political action manifests. Rock Against Communism (RAC), for example, was founded by Ian Stuart Donaldson in 1979 as an explicit right-wing counter to the left-wing organization Rock Against Racism (RAR), which had organized anti-racist concerts between 1976 and 1982. RAC was formed as a branch of the Young National Front, and it was used to organize gigs and distribute records that mainstream record holders refused to sell. Much of the profits from these gigs and sales went directly to supporting the National Front's political endeavors (Dyck 18-19). Another example can be found in the interactions between 2-tone ska fans and oi! fans, wherein neo-Nazis would attempt to crash ska concerts by giving Nazi salutes and starting fights in the audience (*Story of the Skinhead*). In examples such as these, while the music forms a core part of how extremists pursue their goals, the substance of the music is mostly irrelevant. Its power as an economic or social commodity is utilized more so than its power as an art form.

Far-right artists who use their music in this way often have explicit ties to political parties, as was the case with Donaldson and his associations with the National Front. Der Stürmer has been a longtime supporter of the Golden Dawn, a Greek fascist party with a history of violence, including the murder of musician Pavlos Fyssas in 2013. Furthermore, the band's former bassist, Giorgos Germenis, pursued a political career as a member of the party, serving as a lawmaker in the Hellenic parliament while remaining active in the Greek NSBM scene (Williams). Varg Vikernes founded his own political party in 1993 called the Norwegian Heathen Front, based in part upon the beliefs he espoused in his 1994 book *Vargsmål* (Goodrick-Clarke 205-206), which one GoodReads reviewer describes as "Crazy Varg's frustrated ramblings on

race" (Ruben). Through both the book and the political party, Vikernes used his reputation as a musician to gain clout that he could use to espouse his white supremacist beliefs, just as Donaldson and Germenis did. Although these three examples had very explicit political ties, it's also possible that other artists engage in less organized support; though this is conjecture on my part, I would not be surprised if many of the more successful NSBM artists donated some of their earnings to far-right political parties and election candidates.[6]

Some artists, like Skrewdriver, are very explicit in using their music and lyrics to espouse their beliefs directly. On the title track of their 1986 album *Blood and Honour* (which is a direct reference to a slogan used by the Hitler Youth, as I mentioned in a previous section)*,* Donaldson sings:

> Marxists' greedy hands around our throats
>
> Bankers buying up your lives and sitting back to gloat
>
> We should fight to control our people's fate
>
> Europe never was no puppet state.

In just this singular verse we can see the white supremacists' victim ideology on display, as Donaldson portrays Europe as besieged by leftists and "bankers." It's important to note, again, that anytime white supremacists refer to bankers, capitalists or corporations, they are usually actually referring to Jews, as they see these terms as generally synonymous. The second line of this verse also exemplifies the redirection of frustration that I discussed earlier, offering listeners both an explanation for their frustration and a target whom they can take it out on. On another track, "Free My Land" from the 1984 album *Hail the New Dawn,* Donaldson again uses the first

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[6] Information regarding campaign donations (both the amount and the donor) is publicly available in the United States through the Federal Election Commission. The same is true for Norway, though I have been unable to find where this information can be accessed. In the United Kingdom, donations over a certain amount must be publicly disclosed by the Electoral Commission, but the donor may remain anonymous. As most of the artists I am discussing in this paper are not from the United States, I am unable to search for their donation records at this time.

two verses to establish aggressors responsible for Britain's troubles, this time specifying "All the immigrants and left wing lies." In the final verse he urges the listener to take action, singing:

The sands of time are running out for this land

It's time the people stood and raised their hands

It's time we drove out the traitors that we can see

Now is the time this nation should be free.

Der Stürmer's lyrics are even more explicit than Skrewdriver's. Take, for example, "The Hammer Falls on Zion" from their 2001 album *The Blood Calls for W.A.R.!* The chorus reads:

Steel is always stronger than gold

The Hammer Falls On Zion

Our bullets are your just reward

The Hammer Falls On Zion

United by mighty bonds of blood

A New Reich will rise

Striking fear in every coloured scum

Reclaiming what once was ours.

Donaldson's lyrics, at the very least, had a thin veneer of metaphor and ambiguity to cover their fascist message. There's no subtext to be found within Der Stürmer's works; they just outright call for Jewish and non-white genocide. Though the growling and screaming vocal style of black metal can offer some of that ambiguity by obfuscating a track's lyrics, I would be surprised if that actually prevented anyone from understanding the message of a song called something as blunt as "The Hammer Falls on Zion," especially when lyrical transcriptions can be very easily

found online (either from official releases or fan transcriptions on websites like Genius). However, there is the potential for this to work with other, less bluntly titled metal: listeners could form an interest or attachment to a band's music without fully understanding their lyrics and only later learn that they espouse hatred.

Some of the most famous and influential white supremacist musicians do not explicitly espouse their beliefs through their lyrics. Vikernes, for example, opts instead for the content of his music to portray fantasies, myths or narratives that are not explicitly racist or anti-semitic. His early works were broadly inspired by popular fiction, with *The Lord of the Rings* seeming to be one of his favorites, as both his stage name (Count Grishnackh) and the name of his solo project (Burzum) are both references to the orcs of that series, which he sees as the protagonists rather than the villains (Vikernes). The lyrics of his songs from this period are, like Der Stürmer's, largely devoid of meaningful subtext, and they seem to have been written almost entirely for the atmosphere they help build within the song. Take, for example, "Ea, Lord of the Depths" from his first self-titled album:

The head is a head of a serpent

From its nostrils mucus trickles...

The ears are those of a basilisk

The body is a sunfish, full of stars

Ea, lord of the depths...

His horns are twisted into three curls

The body is a sunfish, full of stars

The base of his feet are claws

His name is Sassu Wunnu

A sea monster. A form of Ea

Ea, lord of the depths…

These lyrics are an almost direct quotation of an ancient description of the Akkadian god of water, Ea, as translated by the archaeologist Reginald Campbell Thompson on page 149 of his book *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia.* This passage's use as lyrics by Vikernes has largely eclipsed its original context in terms of popularity, and finding the original context at all was something of a challenge.

In his more recent Burzum albums, Vikernes has moved away from lyrics almost entirely, as well as moving away from black metal as a genre. His most recent album, *Thulêan Mysteries,* released in 2020, has lyrics on only 5 out of 22 tracks, and of those with lyrics, only 2 have more than a few repetitive lines. In terms of genre, the album is largely ambient dungeon synth, which Vikernes recorded as a kind of soundtrack to *MYFAROG*, the overtly racist tabletop role-playing game he wrote where white people are statistically and mechanically more powerful than non-whites (Vikernes). Of the few tracks on his recent albums that have lyrics, they are written with a focus on atmosphere and fantasy, similar to his earlier works, although the fantasies tend now to center around his neopaganist beliefs. They espouse, albeit simply and indirectly, his historically revisionist views of Vikings and his bizarre, neo-Nazi renditions of Norse myth. For example, on "Heill Óðinn, Sire," (which translates fairly directly into "Hail Odin, Sire") one of the lyrical tracks from *Thulêan Mysteries*, Vikernes (accompanied only by a lute) simply repeats the titular phrase a number of times as a kind of prayer to the leader of the old Norse pantheon with which he is obsessed.

In spite of the lack of overt hatred in his music, Vikernes' music is influential enough amongst white supremacists to have been listed as a significant influence alongside other (more

artistically explicit) neo-Nazi artists in the manifesto of Norwegian far-right domestic terrorist

Anders Behring Breivik (Dyck 61), a politically-motivated mass murderer who killed 8 during a

bombing in Oslo and 69 during a mass shooting on the island of Utøya in 2011 (CNN Editorial

Research). The manifesto also praises the works of Saga, who, despite officially denouncing

Breivik's actions, has praised other violent white supremacists in her music. Among these is

David Lane, an American domestic terrorist who coined the "Fourteen Words" (a famous

neo-Nazi slogan) and partook in the murder of a Jewish radio talk show host named Alan Berg in

June of 1984 (Dyck 47, 61).

 I have a theory as to why the different artistic approaches to white power music are all

equally appealling to their listeners:[7] it seems that each of these approaches to hate music fulfills

a separate aspect of the fantasy that white supremacists want to live in. Works that place explicit

blame and portray non-whites as villainous aggressors, such as those of Saga and Skrewdriver,

manifest the perceived victimhood I've discussed previously. Works that portray violence or

feature explicit calls to action, such as those of Der Stürmer, manifest the perceived racial

superiority of whites while simultaneously enforcing their victimhood and offering a path to

escape from that victimhood. Works that portray fantasy and myth, like those of Vikernes,

manifest the cultural and social desires of white supremacists, which they believe cannot be

achieved until they have escaped from their perceived oppression. In other words, artists like

Saga and Skrewdriver tell listeners *who* and *why* they should fight, artists like Der Stürmer tell

listeners *how* they should fight, and artists like Vikernes tell listeners *what they can achieve after*

they win that fight.

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[7] While I'm sure deeper insights could be gleaned directly from the white supremacists themselves, I personally have neither the interest nor the means to engage in the work required to do that. Furthermore, I have absolutely no interest, scholarly or otherwise, in reading Breivik's 1,500 page manifesto, despite its potential contributions to the theory I discuss here.

By varying both their messages and their musical approaches, white supremacist musicians provide listeners with options; they don't have to engage with any singular genre or message in order to find something that they personally resonate with. As I discussed in the previous section, there are many cases in which people who join white supremacist organizations don't always have the ideology fully fleshed out; there may be parts they believe and parts they don't, or they may simply have desires or frustrations that white supremacists can exploit in order to recruit them to the cause (Simi). Diverse musical approaches allow whites supremacists to cast a wider net for recruitment; a given person may enjoy the music of Burzum, but not the music of Skrewdriver, and by having that option they remain open to radicalizing propaganda in broader terms, despite potentially rejecting specific examples of it.

Conclusion

The manifestation of nationalist politics and racist sentiment within skinhead and black metal was not a sudden occurrence, but it was a deliberate one. Although neither subculture was explicitly political at its inception, fascist actors within them were able to take advantage of the social and economic situations of their peers in order to recruit them to their political cause. For skinhead, this was done primarily by Ian Stuart Donaldson and his connections with the National Front, who used their social and economic influence within the subculture (such as ownership of venues) to press party recruitment; this was further facilitated by the subculture's decreasing connectivity with its own multicultural roots. For black metal, it was done by the members of the Black Circle, who pressured one another toward radicalization through a continuous game of one-upmanship, which, through their notoriety within the subculture, established extremist behavior as an expected social norm for members of the scene.

In both cases, the methods of recruitment relied on social pressure and a deliberate exploitation of pre-existing sentiments that, while not fascist in and of themselves, could be easily redirected in racist and anti-semitic directions. Stereotypes regarding gender roles and the pursuit of clout within the subcultures acted as important avenues through which these social pressures manifested, and the fact that most members of these subcultures were young and working class gave greater weight to those pressures. Members' youth and economic troubles may also have contributed to a lack of education that could otherwise have allowed them to recognize and question their own manipulation by people like Donaldson.

As they exist today, both subcultures have earned reputations as places where white supremacists thrive. In a way, this reputation is a kind of end point for the genres' political developments; because of this reputation, those outside of the subculture are loathe to join it unless they already share that supremacist ideology, while those inside the subculture who do not share that ideology are pressured to leave because of their desire to not be associated with that reputation. As a result, it becomes increasingly less likely that the genres will change for the better and become less fascist. Despite this, there are still those within both skinhead and black metal who are explicit about their attempts to deradicalize the genres.

Recently, leftists within heavy metal as a whole have strived to have a more pronounced voice and to confront the genre's Nazi problem more directly. Investigations into the political leanings of specific artists are one facet of this; another facet are attempts to get shows and tours by Nazi bands canceled by the venue; another takes the form of explicitly anti-fascist or anti-racist concerts and festivals, such as the fifteen-band Black Flags Over Brooklyn festival in 2019 (Moynihan). Some modern skinheads follow similar pursuits and are attempting to revive the subculture's multicultural roots (*Story of the Skinhead*).

The attempts to deradicalize these genres have functioned in tandem with the deplatforming of racist artists, such as the cancellation of performances and record label contracts. By depriving fascist artists of the means to sell and perform their music, they are deprived of recruitment opportunities while simultaneously having economic pressure placed upon them. Although this may not cause fascist artists to change their beliefs, it prevents them from spreading those beliefs while simultaneously opening up space within the genre for non-racist artists to sell and perform their music.

For leftist musicians like myself, who are involved even tangentially with these (or similar) genres, our ability to remain politically independent of the genre's political reputation hinges in part on our relationship to that reputation. By spreading awareness of our own presence (through things like the Black Flags Over Brooklyn festival, for example) and actively fighting against the spread of fascist music (through pressuring venues and labels to cancel their shows and contracts, for example), we may be able to reverse the growth of white supremacist movements within hardcore music. Furthermore, by promoting a deeper understanding of the history of these genres and the political divisions within them, we can help to prevent people uninvolved with these genres from condemning them in their entirety. Though I believe it is unlikely that the presence of hate within these subcultures will ever fully disappear, we may at the very least assert our own existence and change the reputations of these genres, and, in doing so, work to preserve non-racist and anti-racist versions of the art form despite the existence of its hate-filled sibling.

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