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Extreme Politics and Extreme Metal: Strange Bedfellows or Fellow Travelers?

Extreme Metal's relation to extreme politics provides a variety of examples. From Slayer's "Angel of Death" in the 1980's to the Norwegian black metal scene in the 1990's to the current strain of National Socialist Black Metal – extreme politics have played a role in extreme metal either aesthetically or ideologically. Heavy Metal's own relation with such extreme attitudes has a history that has been around almost as long the genre itself. These attitudes range from the ultra-right (racist and neo-Nazi) and some instances ultra-left wing (communist and anarchist). Such combinations are nothing new in the music world. Richard Wagner's denouncement of Jews is widely known. Furthermore, the *strange but true* phenomena of racist country and punk will be also be touched on. Additionally, racist lyrics have in the past cropped up in big name hip-hop acts. This paper will look at how far and how often Heavy Metal has pushed the limits of not only sound but of ideas.

Much before the controversies surrounding Metal and even before rock and roll there was Richard Wagner. Wagner is considered the catalyst for the ultimate "art over politics" debate in music. While Wagnerian clichés such as "it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings" are still prevalent, Wagner's work is still attached to much controversy. Adolf Hitler said: "Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner".¹ Wagner's music was often used at Nazi party rallies and followed Hitler's radio speeches. There are many who still associate his music specifically with Nazi Germany.

In July 2001, Jewish composer Daniel Barenboim conducted the piece "Tristan und Isolde" at the prestigious Berlin Staatskapelle's Israel Festival. When he asked the audience if they wanted to hear Wagner as an encore to the regular program it sparked a half-hour debate before the performance, and many Israelis protested and walked out of the theater.

Johnny Rebel, aka: C.J. Trahan, a late 60's New Orleans area musician. Under the name Johnny Rebel, Trahan recorded songs with titles such as "Kajun Klu [sic] Klux Klan", "Nigger Hatin' Me", and "Some Niggers Never Die (They Just Smell That Way)".² The songs were done up in the contemporary country style, featuring a backing band. Stylistically it's also been described as the regional take on rockabilly – "swampabilly". While the Johnny Rebel 45s mostly were used in juke joints throughout Louisiana – decades later they were bootlegged in Europe by and found their way into other regions of the U.S. One of the main bootleggers was the American label Resistance Records whose involvement in "hate music" we'll touch on later.

Moving into the early 70's, the early American punk scene adopted the swastika as a shock tactic to rebel against the "safe" music era of E.L.P. and David Cassidy. One of the first bands to use the swastika was Cleveland-based, proto-punkers, The Electric Eels. Guitarist, John Morton called their approach "art terrorism". Their fashion sense pre-dated the tattered and torn look of the UK's "Class of '77". As Cleveland punk historian Mike Weldon said:

In 1974, they (The Electric Eels) were wearing safety pins and ripped-up shirts, T-shirts insulting things on them, White Power logos and swastikas: it was offensive and they meant to be offensive. They meant to distract people, but I don't think they were exceptionally racist: they were being obnoxious and outrageous.³

In 1974, the New York Dolls flirted with Communist hammer and sickles and one photo even shows the later line up with guitarist Johnny Thunders wearing a swastika. The band's manager, Malcolm McLaren would later gain infamy in by working with the Sex Pistols in Britain. The British punk scene of the late 70's quickly picked up on the swastika as shock-tactic from the Sex Pistols and their

¹ *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler* Peter Viereck, Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, New Jersey, 2004, p. 137

² Pittman N., 'Johnny Rebel Speaks', *Best of New Orleans* (posted 10 June 2003, viewed 26 September 2008), http://www.bestofneworleans.com/dispatch/2003-06-10/news_feat.html

³ Savage J. 'Pere Ubu: 30 Seconds of Tokyo (1975)', *England's Dreaming – Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 135.

affiliated groups like Siouxsie and the Banshees. During the time of 1977-78 many punk fans gravitated towards this look while others felt it was just helping the neo-fascist National Front gain popularity.⁴

Additionally, the punk's use of the swastika came following the time when Eric Clapton's praised the National Front. In August 1976 told an audience to "vote for Enoch Powell" and: "Stop Britain from becoming a black colony...Get the foreigners out". To turn the tide, an organization called "Rock Against Racism" put together a major campaign with the punk scene. Rock Against Racism was formed in 1977 as part of the umbrella group, The Anti-Nazi League. Several punk and reggae bands played benefits for Rock Against Racism including X-Ray Spex, the Buzzcocks and Steel Pulse.

To counteract this, the National Front formed "Rock Against Communism", in reaction to the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party connected to Rock Against Racism. Rock Against Communism was first led by the National Front and then reconvened in 1982 under the leadership of Ian Stewart Donaldson, from the Nazi skinhead Oi! Punk band, Skrewdriver.⁵ Through Rock Against Communism, Stewart created a label called White Noise Records who released albums by other Nazi skinhead bands such as Brutal Attack, No Remorse and Skullhead. Skrewdriver's *Hail the New Dawn* was released in 1984 and continues to be a huge inspiration to the white nationalist movement worldwide. Even though the album seemed like it was from a very marginal fanbase, it's currently selling on Amazon.com.

In 1987, 2 Skrewdriver albums: *The Voice of Britain* and *Boots and Braces* were released by Germany's Rock-O-Rama Records (who coincidentally released left wing Finnish hardcore punk bands like Riistetyt and Appendix). The same year, Donaldson formed a new organization called "Blood and Honour" whose goals were to unite white youth and promote white power "through positive ideals and a positive message". Other aims included, "to create units in every city, every town in every country. To promote our culture and our traditions."⁶ This is especially true considering Blood and Honour has chapters several countries in Europe including Czech Republic, Finland, Switzerland, Serbia, Hungary and Sweden as well as Argentina, Australia and South Africa. Additionally, Blood and Honour also has several chapters in the U.S. in Texas, Georgia, Ohio and California.

Blood and Honour was also, "a magazine promoting (National Socialist) NS ideals, NS music, be it rock. Oi!, metal, etc."⁷ Much to their aim, the Australian metal band Death's Head has played shows for Blood and Honour and can be seen on *Metal-Archives.com* in front of their banner. The band features Ryan Marauder, guitarist of the black and death metal bands Gospel of the Horns and Destroyer 666, both of whom are a bit more based in the general metal tradition of blunt lyrics about war, Satan and sex.

During the early 90's, "gangsta rap", an offshoot of hip-hop received tons of sensational media coverage not seen since the early days of rock and roll. Due to the fact that it was a predominately African-American based style; it sounded the alarm in suburban white America. In turn, this replaced the Tipper Gore fronted Parents Music Resource Center's focus on "explicit lyrics" from heavy metal to Hip-Hop. Ironically, gangsta rap's biggest fan base was predominately suburban youth. The time period of 1988-1991 hip-hop was filled with racially charged lyrics. In 1991, Ice Cube's song "Black Korea", on his second solo album *Death Certificate*, spewed venom towards Koreans in South Central L.A., "...your little chop suey ass will be a target/So pay your respects to the black fist/or we'll burn your store right down to a crisp."

Ice Cube's lyrics were a spot-on foreshadowing of what was to come in the barren neighborhoods of L.A.'s South Central. During the 1992 riots, many black youths attacked Koreans shops. While a more direct correlation may be made from growing tensions between the two communities as opposed to

⁴ Marko P. 'Punk and the Swastika' *Punk77.com*, (posted 4 September 2008 and 5 September, 2008, viewed 27 September, 2008), <http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/punkandtheswastika.htm>

⁵ Oi! Punk was a working class based offshoot of the original punk that often featured rough tempos and very pronounced, soccer hooligan-like choruses. Many Oi! bands that are not racist or even right wing. Many groups like Angelic Upstarts, The Oppressed and The Templars (half of whom the are African-American) are either left-wing or non-political.

⁶ Blood and Honour England, 'Diamond in the Dust, The Ian Stuart Biography' *Skrewdriver.net*, London 2002 (updated 24 September 2008, viewed 4 October 2008). <http://www.skrewdriver.net/diamond.html>

⁷ *ibid*

lyrics in a popular rap song, there still is a lot to be taken from Ice Cube's lyrics.⁸ In a 2006 interview with the men's magazine, FHM Ice Cube said, "if they (Koreans) still have a problem, it's their problem (not mine)". Additional controversies in the early 90's arose with statements made by Public Enemy's "Ministry of Information", Professor Griff. In a 1988 Washington Times interview, Professor Griff said that Jews "are responsible for "the majority of the wickedness that goes on across the globe."

Getting into the crux of our focus, Heavy Metal has been dismissed by the political right wing as "amoral", "decadent", "anti-Christian" whereas the left wing has traditionally deemed it to be "sexist", "fascistic" and "close minded".⁹ Regardless of these critiques it has become something more than music in relation to provocation both symbolically and politically. What is represented by these symbols and are they used for just shock value or an actual political motive?

The first band in heavy metal that was considered "extreme" was Motörhead – a British band so loud and heavy "if they moved in next door they'd kill your lawn". When they debuted in 1977, they made even Judas Priest seem *normal*. Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead has for many years collected Nazi memorabilia. Although, he collects SS banners, flags and daggers for strictly non-political reasons: "I like having this all this stuff around because it's a reminder of what happened, and that it's in the past (for the most part – Nazism still exists, but at the margin)." Lemmy's said that he's against any left wing or right-wing extreme and defines himself as "an atheist and an anarchist".¹⁰

Some general definitions before we start getting deeper into metal – "thrash metal" grew from both the speed of hardcore punk bands like Discharge, The Misfits and Black Flag and merged the aggression of heavy metal bands Judas Priest, Iron Maiden and Motörhead. A few notable examples of thrash metal are the American "Big Four": Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer and Anthrax. Additional, noteworthy thrash bands include Exodus, Kreator, Sodom and Destruction. The style often employs crunchy guitar riffs and shouted "gang" choruses.

Death metal began in the mid-80s with the releases of American bands as Possessed with their 1985 album *Seven Churches*. The Florida band Death followed in 1987 with their debut "Scream Bloody Gore". The style is known for going even faster than thrash metal taking in the blast beat which can run anywhere between the standard 180 to the hyper blasting 300 beats per minute. Vocals are often growled into a low pitch. The pitch and tone of the pitch will depend on the vocalist. These range from utterly incomprehensible in early Cannibal Corpse to the melodic of Dark Tranquility. Other significant death metal bands include, Entombed, Carcass, Morbid Angel, Obituary and Amon Amarth. Death metal is the most common sub genre around the world. The largest database of metal music, *Metal-Archives.com*, lists 11,756 active death metal bands.

Death metal occasionally flirted with extreme right-wing politics. Florida-based band, Malevolent Creation got themselves in trouble with both their lyrics to the song "They Breed" which the line: "Someday you will feel the hate/You fucking niggers". The claimed this last line was merely them speaking as an extremely enraged person. Not endorsing the idea of racism. Although, if that wasn't enough the antics of their bassist Jason Blachowicz got them in more trouble when he wore a KKK t-shirt onstage in Germany. Guitarist Phil Facinia, prompted kick him out of the band: "When I got onto the bus and he was fuckin' laughing about it, I fuckin' beat the living shit out of him...it worked and I haven't talked to him since."¹¹

⁸ Christgau, R., 'The Shit Storm', *robertchristgau.com* (originally appeared in *LA Weekly*, 1989, updated 21 September 2008, viewed 28 September 2008) <http://www.robertchristgau.com/xg/music/pe-law.php>

⁹ Eddy, C., 'An Overview of Overkill', *Stairway to Hell: The 500 Best Heavy Metal Albums in the Universe*, Harmony Books, New York, first edition 1991, pg 2. Eddy disdains such criticisms: "HM's (Heavy Metal's) long been chastised for its misogynous and/or authoritarian lyrical slant; this slant used to bug me a lot, but know I wonder how I could ever have taken the shit so seriously."

¹⁰ Eddy, C., 'Damage Case: Lemmy and Motorhead', *Motorhead Forever – The Unofficial Site*, (date unknown 1997, viewed, 2 October 2008), <http://www.motorhead.ru/art11damagecase.htm>

¹¹ Schwarz, P., 'Malevolent Mass Murdering Maniacs: Malevolent Creation's Phil Fasciana', *Chronicles of Chaos*, (Posted 19 November 1998, viewed 2 October 2008), http://www.chronicsofchaos.com/articles/chats/1-195_malevolent_creation.aspx

Black metal began with the raw and dirty near-punk styling of Newcastle, England's Venom. If Black Sabbath's flirted with Satan and the occult – then Venom went further. Instead of Sabbath singing, “please god help me”, Venom requested to “leave me in hell”, and proclaimed to be “possessed by all that is evil”. Venom later recanted any support of Satanism in a 1985 interview with *Kerrang!* magazine. Vocalist/bassist Cronos said, “Look, I don't preach Satanism, occultism, witchcraft, or anything. Rock and Roll is basically entertainment and that's as far as it goes.” Another significant bands in the first wave of Black Metal include Mercyful Fate (Denmark). They created a more classic yet theatrical metal sounds forged around bits of Judas Priest and Deep Purple. Mercyful Fate's vocalist, King Diamond is a member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. Although, it's important to keep in mind that King Diamond sees himself more as an entertainer first and a Satanist second.

Equally important was Hellhammer and the refined epics of Celtic Frost (both related bands from Switzerland). Hellhammer wrote about Satanism whereas Celtic Frost moved onto to more otherworldly works of H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard. Other worthy contributions to the first era of black metal came from Sweden's Bathory. Bathory's early albums *Bathory*, ...*The Return*, and *Under the Sign of the Black Mark* released between 1984-87 featured raw production, very fast tempo and raspy vocals. This also helped Swedish metal find a more extreme musical identity. Whereas before their scene was represented by the pomp rock of Europe and the guitar shredding excess of Yngwie Malmsteen.

Black metal's second wave came mostly through Scandinavia, significantly from Norway. What separates the second wave from the first is not only the image of black and white, corpse-painted faces and but also the level of the music's speed and intensity. The make up differed from KISS or Alice Cooper in that it attempts to portray something more sinister. A direct influence came from the cover of “I.N.R.I.” and 1987 album from the Brazilian band Sacrofago. In the photo all 4 members are black and white make up, menacingly standing in a graveyard. Plus, Sacrofago's chaotic mix of hyper-thrash metal infused with embryonic death and black metal elements were held in high esteem by the Norwegian scene. Instead of making corpse paint an added dimension of a stage show, it was in the words of Abbath of the band Immortal, “...to celebrate our inner demons – it's not a theater thing.”

Similar to death metal black metal also employed blast beats but took on the Bathory-ish raspy vocals. It often featured long passages of lightning quick, treble-based riffs. These riffs repeat in intervals between 5 to 7 notes, often causing a “trance-like” effect. A great example of this is Darkthrone's *Transilvanian Hunger* album.

Other significant black metal bands from this time include, Mayhem, Emperor, Enslaved, Immortal, Ulver and Gorgoroth and Dimmu Borgir. Also of note are several Swedish bands such as Marduk and Dissection, along with the Finnish groups Beherit and Impaled Nazarene.

The current or third wave of wave of black metal is a mish-mash of styles ranging from the thrash infected sound of Aura Noir to the avant-weirdness of Lugubrum to the slow doom of Nortt. In recent years commercial oriented black metal groups like Dimmu Borgir and Cradle of Filth have played in front of 10,000+ fans as part of Ozzfest. Immortal's 2007 reunion shows in L.A. and New York commanded ticket prices of \$100. Additionally, Black Metal's aesthetic influence has been featured in art galleries, multiple documentaries and news reports worldwide, comic books and even fashion runways. Whether this is promoting the “true” face of black metal is still up for debate.

Stormtroopers of Death, a side project of Anthrax's Scott Ian and Nuclear Assault's Dan Liker. The band's debut *Speak English Or Die*, while filled with harsh humor and silly lyrics about milk was considered by most as a joke. Ian came up with the idea as when he first thought of the band's mascot, Sergeant D. - an ultra right wing comic book-like character set to the tone of crossover mosh metal. It seems that S.O.D. was merely the product of their times, in an age where offensive humor wasn't considered necessarily offensive. Sonically, it was considered important by fusing the velocity and speed of hardcore with the crunch riffing of thrash metal.

It's also important to note that they were around the same time as bands from the hardcore/punk scene such as the Meatmen who released the anti-Arab song “Ragheads Suck” and of the Mentors whose self-described “Rape Rock” was as more musically and lyrically awful than it was literally threatening. Also, considering that any post-1985 album has been largely ignored, S.O.D.'s legacy has almost exclusively refers to their platinum selling debut. The title track to *Speak English or Die*, offered up

several response versions from a few hardcore bands - namely, "Speak Siberian or Die" from England's Concrete Sox and "Speak Japanese or Die" Japan's by Yellowmachinegun. Ironically, S.O.D. played and recorded "Speak English or Die" live in Japan. S.O.D. also released the anti-racist song, "Skool Bus" on their 1999 album, *Bigger than the Devil*.

However, if S.O.D. was taken as a joke then what could be said of vocalist's Billy Milano next band M.O.D. (Method of Destruction)? M.O.D.'s first album "U.S.A. for M.O.D." was a parody of the mid-80's humanitarian pop phenomenon of "We Are The World" and Live Aid. Instead of offering an "uplifting message", M.O.D. offered these words: "America has it's own problems/That's what should come first/So fuck those nigger's charity/And let them die of thirst." Milano defended his lyrics as a satire on reactionary attitudes in an open letter to Aardshok magazine:

...To start you must understand that we (M.O.D.) believe that to truly stir up negative emotions about racism, hatred, facism [sic], etc. you cannot write a song from the third party situation. What would be stronger than taking on the identity, in the first person of a facist, racist bigot and writing lyrics as he sees the world? I created 'Corporal Punishment' as this character." [...] "Again, please realize these are not my opinions..."¹²

Another New York-era thrash metal band in the mid 80's know for controversial lyrics was the Peter Steele-led Carnivore. Carnivore dressed like a heavy metal version of extras from "The Road Warrior". They portrayed the brute force of metal and a post-apocalyptic warrior mentality onto songs with titles such as "Male Supremacy" and "Race War". The first is written in a thickheaded interpretation of an ultra-macho character 'ala Conan. The lyrics are so overtly over the top it does seem like there's a bit of exaggeration and sarcasm at play. Particularly, with lines guess if lines like "when on the fur I make love to her." The latter song "Race War" on the surface blatantly calls for what the title states. Proclamations like: "Don't call me your brother/Cause I ain't your fuckin' brother/We fell from different cunts/And your skins an ugly color". Although the song also includes the lines: "everybody loses". Steve Tobin when interviewed by a German e-zine said:

I personally see Carnivore songs as some tongue-in-cheek humor as well as some sarcasm happening. I say what's on my mind and so does everybody else in this band, especially Pete.¹³

Carnivore altogether may have been "tongue in cheek". However, the Carnivore's tribute album, *If You Can't Eat It Or Fuck It... Then Kill It* was released by Fetch the Rope, a label that solely promotes white power bands. The album was also distributed by Vinland Winds, a label key in promoting National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) in the U.S. Additionally, the compilation features the French NSBM band Hakenkreuzzug and U.S. racist death metallers, Arghoslent.¹² The album is also carried by such non-political metal mail order sites as Hell's Headbangers, Black-Metal.com in the U.S. and Iron Tyrant in Italy.¹⁴

The same year Carnivore released their debut, Slayer's *Reign In Blood* came out with much adulation and controversy. The opening track "Angel of Death" which deal with Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele and his twisted experiments in the concentration camps. The song starts with a pained scream and jolts forth with an extreme level of sonic intensity. Such intensity that people often reacted in feeling the words "Auschwitz, the meaning of pain/The way that I want you to die" was *literal* instead of descriptive. The rest of the song lyrics also mention, "destroying without mercy to benefit the Aryan race". Although, this is the band *describing* the deeds of a madman not *telling* you "hey, go out kill Jews in the name of Slayer". The song is just as proactive as the rest of the songs on the album that go into extreme detail regarding methods of killing -which aren't any different than a graphic mystery or horror novel. Guitarist Jeff Hanneman's spoke to KNAC.com of his obsession with war, particularly with World War II:

¹² Milano B., *Milano on Disc*, quoted from open letter published in *Aardschok/Metal Hammer*, December 1987, Germany and The Netherlands, December 1987, (posted October 2004, viewed 2 October 2008) <http://dudab.tripod.com/stormtroopersofdeath/id2.html>

¹³ Ghoul (forum poster) 'Interview with Steve' *Inner Conflict the Carnivore official site*, (Posted 18 September 2006, viewed 2 October 2008) <http://www.inner-conflict.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=74>

¹⁴ Vinland Winds, 'A Tribute To Carnivore - If You Can't Eat It Or Fuck It... Then Kill It!' via *ElegyRecords.com*, Clifton, New Jersey (updated 28 September 2008, viewed 2 October 2008), <http://www.elegyrecords.com/Store/tabid/54/CategoryID/3/List/1/Level/1/ProductID/1044/Default.aspx>

Well, my father was in WWII. ...And then one day my dad was just cleaning out his closet, and he dumped all these (Nazi) medals on me and goes, 'You want these? I'm gonna throw 'em out if you don't'. I was like, 'Whoa! Yeah!'

....There was nothing really to do while on tour), so I would just buy books about WWII and just read and read and read...Right before I wrote "Angel Of Death," I read a bunch of books about [Nazi Doctor Josef] Mengele because he was pretty sick. That was how "Angel Of Death" came about...I know why people misinterpret it it's because they get this knee-jerk reaction to it. When they read the lyrics, there's nothing I put in the lyrics that says necessarily he was a bad man, because to me -- well, isn't that obvious?!?!?!¹⁵

Additionally, the band had some trouble on their first European tour in 1985. In the Netherlands they were banned from selling their then-popular "Slaytanic Wehrmacht" ("Satanic War machine") fan club t-shirts. The band sold this t-shirt during the "Hell Awaits" tour along with many record stores and rock merchandisers worldwide. Again, this is Slayer going the *beyond the before* – if KISS' fan club is "the army" then Slayer's will be a weremacht. This non-political, fantastical version of "a wehrmacht" not "the Wehrmacht" can be seen in the context of similar minded fan clubs of other metal bands - Mercyful Fate's "Coven", Venom's "Legions", and Celtic Frost's "Necromaniac Union".

Despite this, Slayer's still has a following among some "white power" types. Bay Area heavy metal photographer and blogger, Brian Lew spoken of his witnessing Nazis at Slayer shows: "it seems like these Nazis think the singer's name is Tom Aryan and not Tom Araya." Lew has known the members of Slayer since they played their first show in San Francisco in 1983.

Every time I've been to a Metal show in the Central Valley in recent years, the White Power Thang has been in full effect and this night was no exception. It's not often that I'm in a public place where White Boyz (sic) are comfortable enough to go sans shirts to show off their Aryan Ink." Lew sarcastically commented: I think the White Boyz are simply confused and their limited reading comprehension sees Tom Aryan and not "Araya" in Slayer's liner notes...Of course, I'd like to hear their rationalization about why Tom's skin is brown.¹⁶

Far down into the underground of metal during the 80's was a collection of bands using Nazi imagery. Much of this while questionable was on the same naivety of the 70's punk movement. The bands included were later-era thrash and early death metal bands Holocausto (Brazil), Mein Kampf and Rommel (both from Japan), Angel Reaper (Hungary) and Separator (Poland). All of these bands had used swastikas or images of SS soldiers and flirted with the themes in their lyrics but all had no connections to any actual political movements, made racist statements in interviews or neo-Nazi affiliated label. There are also early photos of Max Cavalera of Sepultura wearing a swastika t-shirt. Although, Cavalera's action could also be attributed to a teenage level shock value.

Between 1992-94 death metal reigned at the top of the metal underground. Bands like Carcass, Entombed and Morbid Angel all received MTV play and were also featured in hundreds of metal magazines and fanzines worldwide. While their music was certainly extreme others felt that it didn't go far enough. In the late period of this era, many death metal bands were doing "normal" things like going on stage with sweatpants and t-shirts whereas the then burgeoning 2nd wave of Black Metal would demand much more. 1994 also marked the year when Cannibal Corpse could perform the song "Meat Hook Sodomy" in a mainstream comedy like "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective".

Bubbling under the overgrowth of death metal and its alleged (love of) "life metal" were several bands like Mayhem, Darkthrone and Burzum. Even though they began as a death metal band, Darkthrone changed styles because they felt death metal wasn't going anywhere. Drummer Gylve "Fenriz" Nagell said of its regression, "it was all (turning into) this P.C. shit...about voting..." Also, Regarding Darkthrone's massively influential 1991 release, "A Blaze in The Northern Sky", Fenriz, says: "we

¹⁶ Lew B., 'SLAYER, Memorial Auditorium, Sacramento, CA, January 28, 2007', *Haggis Buffet blog*, (Posted 31st January 2007, viewed 2 October, 2008), <http://haggisbuffet.blogspot.com/search?q=SLAYER+Memorial+Auditorium%2C+Sacramento%2C+CA+January+28%2C+2007>

went for a grimmer approach to say the least.” Guitarist and vocalist Ted “Nocturnal Culto” Skjellum said, “The metal scene in Norway was very small, very limited”¹⁷

Before Darkthrone, Norway’s only black metal band was Mayhem. Releasing the “Deathcrush” LP in 1987 while still teenagers, it made an impact on a small level in the fanzine/tape trading underground. The later line-ups of Mayhem were initially known in the press of the sensation activities around surrounding the band: the 1991 suicide of their 2nd vocalist Dead (Per Yngve Ohlin), the eating of pieces of Dead’s brain by guitarist Euronymous, the church burnings and grave desecrations. When asked about this level of lawlessness Euronymous countered with:

WE ARE FOR FUCK'S SAKE NOT A HUMANITARIAN JOKE BAND! When we say that we are into death-metal then it means we worship the dead. There is nothing that is too raw, disgusting or sick (morbid). People who don't understand this can GO TO HELL!¹⁸

The eventual inner-band rivalry between Euronymous and Varg Vikernes set the stage for even more controversy. This rivalry between eventually led to the brutal murder of Euronymous. The story has been widely documented in the media inside and outside of Norway. Tabloid headlines at the time also surrounded the rash of church burnings in Norway. Several members in the Black Metal scene committed a large number of the church burnings. Namely, Tomas “Samoth” Haugen and Bård “Faust” Eithun both of Emperor, Jørn Tonsborg of Hades Almighty and Vikernes committed these arsons. Vikernes’ own church burnings numbered up to 8 – ranging from the Oslo area in the Southeastern region to the West coast near Bergen. Church burnings and graveyard desecrations were eventually done by teens who claimed to be part of the black metal scene and yet didn’t play in bands, run labels or create zines. Regardless of “authenticity” these acts also took place in Sweden, England and Germany.

The night of August 10, 1993 Varg killed Euronymous by stabbing him 27 times and leaving the knife in his victim’s eye socket. Vikernes claims self-defense and says that Euronymous attacked him first. However considering that there was no witness to the murder itself, Vikernes information seems dubious. Vikernes is now serving the maximum sentence of 21 years for the murder and multiple church arsons.

The months leading up the murder Vikernes and Euronymous had a very intense relationship. The two would had debates about music, bands they wanted to promote on Euronymous label, Deathlike Silence. Euronymous was more international in his thinking and had signed bands from Sweden, Japan and Israel. The latter of which got him into much trouble with Varg. Vikernes’ ideology was extremely right-wing and didn’t want Mayhem much less the Black Metal scene supporting “a bunch of Jews”. In turn, Vikernes sent a mail bomb to Salem vocalist Ze’eb Tanboim that was intercepted by the Israeli police. Additionally, Vikernes had plans to blow up the Oslo based anarchist squat, Blitz House. During his time in prison, Vikernes made 3 albums – “Filosfem” (his last metal album), 2 ambient, nearly ‘new age’ sounding works with Old Norse titles: “Dauði Baldrs” (“The Death of Baldr”) and Hliðskjálf” (“Secret Ritual Site”). Additionally, Vikernes has written many philosophic works incorporating racist version of Norse paganism and “Aryan philosophy”. One article, explains Burzum’s change from metal to ambient music which states:

...to be a true Aryan, one has to think like an Aryan as well, and people will never do that as long as they keep polluting their minds with alien (read: metal) music, or even worse; alien music and alien lyrics!¹⁹

Vikernes has published 5 books and booklets which are posted as PDF files on his website. These books discuss his among the paganism mentioned earlier, his version of the murder of Euronymous and Varg’s own rocky relations with the media. Burzum’s music was also featured on the soundtrack of the pseudo-documentary, *Gummo* in 1998. Due to coverage in American and British media, in a wide array of publications ranging from the metal scene (*Kerrang!*, *Pit* and *Sounds of Death*) to a number of

¹⁷ Fenriz and Nocturno Culto both speaking in the video bonus on *Darkthrone: The Interview – Chapter 2* from *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, reissue, Peaceville Records, UK 2003.

¹⁸ Sauron, L. and Lacoste, ‘Interview with Euronymous Close-Up, Issue #4’, (no date listed, viewed 30 September 2008), <http://members.fortunecity.com/kazanfalkowopie/mayheminter.html>

¹⁹ Vikernes, V., ‘Varg Speaks On the Change in the Musical style of Burzum’, *burzum.com* (updated 9 October 2008, viewed 4 October 2008), http://www.burzum.com/burzum/library/text/heavy_metal/

unexpected places (*New Music Express*, *New York Press* and *The Guardian UK*). Burzum's records and merchandise are widely distributed on the Internet and in independent record stores. Additionally, Burzum has garnered 8 tribute album compilations. Unholy Records, a sub-label of the white-power label Resistance, put out the first tribute.²⁰

Possibly due to the extensive sensationalistic media coverage Vikernes has become like a contemporary, heavy metal Charles Manson. T-shirts adorned with his visage of holding a spiked club can be found on dozens rock n' roll t-shirt sellers online and in stores. Once such store I found in Berkeley, California while sitting having dinner on Telegraph Ave. I looked out the window at the t-shirt shop to find Varg's image staring back me with a spiked club in hand! Obviously this could be attributed to "dangerous celebrity" = "easy to market product". In a way, a Burzum t-shirt was akin to the early 90's sensation of serial killer memorabilia like Jeffery Dahmer t-shirts and Albert Fish trading cards. However, some fans such as the one named Rainer who runs the Burzum.com fansite says:

If you walk down a street wearing an (offensive/"hate everyone equally" grindcore band) Anal Cunt shirt, you might get the message across to certain people that you hate them, hate society and hate its values. If you wear a Burzum shirt, you get the message across that you hate society and its values and you are working to create a new society with new values.²¹

In recent years, with his failed escape attempt shown all over the world via YouTube – Vikernes has largely become fodder for Internet mocking. However, some metal sites such as the Hessian.org have called him a political prisoner and his music – specifically on *Hvis Lytt Tarr Oss*, as "beyond brilliant". A recent eBay seller was asking for \$1,125.00 (814 EUR) for a first pressing of Burzum's *Aske* LP.

The marketing of the story of Mayhem and specifically his own story is quite remarkable. The making of his visage and album covers on t-shirts is has turned up all over the place. Metal bands from Australia to Chile have worn his t-shirts or have been influenced by his music.

Vikernes' racism goes back to the Wagner argument in that his music has been hugely influential in black metal and even other sub genres like doom metal. His lyrics are mostly about Norse mythos and dream without actual mention of race or fascist ideas. His influence unlike that of the racist punk of Skrewdriver went far beyond the parameters of a marginal scene.

In 1994, Darkthrone stirred up controversy with their album "Transilvanian Hunger" the back cover of which originally said "Norsk Arisk Black Metal" (Norwegian for "Norwegian Aryan Black Metal"). Added fuel to the fire was their initial response to distributors who wouldn't carry the album:

"We would like to state that Transilvanian Hunger stands beyond any criticism. If any man should attempt to criticize this LP, he should be thoroughly patronized for his obviously Jewish behavior."²²

However, Darkthrone later explained that "Jew" was synonymous with Norwegian slang for "jerk" or "stupid". Regardless of the clumsy misinterpretation, Darkthrone's press release made it very clear that they were not racist or political:

...'Jew' was ABSOLUTELY NOT intended to hurt or provoke anyone, and we apologize to anyone who has suffered. Also, it must be said the NONE of our albums have ever contained any racism/fascism or Nazi slant at all. Everyone can check this out by reading our lyrics.²³

Additional evidence over the years has shown Darkthrone to be completely centered on creating and promoting music: black metal and otherwise. In recent years, Darkthrone, specifically through drummer Fenriz, has been featured in some of the most entertaining metal interviews featured on YouTube. His "music geek" styled humor has even inspired a fansite called "Take Me To Your Fenriz.

²⁰ Anon. 'Visions 2002, Cymophane Productions', 'Discography-Tributes' on *Burzum.org* (updated 2008, viewed, 3 October 2008), http://www.burzum.org/eng/discography/tributes/2002_visions.shtml and <http://www.burzum.org/eng/discography/>

²¹ Reiner, 'Varg Vikernes Biography' *burzum.com* (updated 1 October 2008, viewed 3 October 2008) <http://www.burzum.com/burzum/biography/>

²² Moynihan, M. and Söderlind, D., 'Black Metal Black Shirts', *Lords of Chaos*, first edition Feral House, Venice, California, 1998, pgs. 304-307.

²³ *ibid.*

On Darkthrone's official Myspace page he proclaims "the Fenriz attitude" as: "20% john mcenroe, 20% jello biafra, 20% lemmy, 20% king diamond, 20% larry david - 100% maniac!!!", hardly the words of a neo-Nazi.

In March 1995, Phil Anselmo of Pantera gave a "white pride" speech onstage on Montreal. Anselmo ranted against hip-hop artists who are "basically saying it's okay to kill white people... This is our world, and tonight is a white thing". One Black female fan told the Montreal Gazette, "I'm not saying he's a white supremacist, but I think he isn't able to articulate himself properly and that he harbors racist views."²⁴

The post-World War II fascist movement didn't get its foothold into the metal scene until around the early 90's. In 1994, the Wisconsin band Centurion released their album "14 Words". Centurion's music ranges from standard thrash metal to melodic traditional metal like Manowar. "14 Words" was based on David Lane's infamous slogan of: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children." He also wrote the "88 Precepts" which were guidelines for establishing and securing a white nation. Although, Lane is more known for his deeds than his words.

David Lane was a member of the racist terrorist organization, The Order. The Order aka: die Bruder Schweigen (German for "The Silent Brotherhood"). Lane along Order member Bruce Pierce was complicit in the murder of Denver radio talk show host, Alan Berg. A month after the murder of Berg, 12 members of the Order committed an armed robbery of a Brinks truck in Ukiah, California taking \$3.6 million. The Order was eventually caught with Lane receiving a 150-year prison sentence. Within white nationalist movements the numbers 14/88 refer to his "14 Words" and the 88 to both his precepts and often to "HH" or "Heil Hitler" since h is the 8th letter of the alphabet.

The advent of the websites in the mid-late 1990s paved the way for independent record labels to sell and distribute their music more easily. With more contacts and e-mail campaigns, a label could get the word out by simply posting their URL in a CD. The American ultra-right took notice of this. Tom Metzger became the mouthpiece of Nazi skinheads on West Coast with the notorious skinhead group White Aryan Resistance ("W.A.R."). On the East Coast, William Luther Pierce a former physics professor at Oregon State had a long resume with American racist movements. Specifically, he worked with American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell in the 1960's. Pierce founded the National Alliance, an American fascist organization and publisher of the racist fantasy book "The Turner Diaries" written by Pierce under the pseudonym, Andrew MacDonald in 1980. "The Turner Diaries" has been called "the bible of the racist right" and details an "Aryan world takeover", bombings of federal buildings. The book received a bevy of mainstream media attention when it was found Oklahoma City federal building bomber, Timothy McVeigh's car in 1995. It also appeared in the belongings of the two men convicted of the dragging death of African-American, James Byrd. Byrd's killer said "We're starting the Turner Diaries early".

Tom Metzger and W.A.R. did the talk show circuit in the late 80s and early 90s, most infamously on the 1989 "Geraldo" episode where one of the White Aryan Resistance skinhead's broke host Geraldo Rivera's nose. Metzger's only major attempt in promoting ultra-right music was a failure – often involving Nazi skinheads attempted to infiltrate punk venues like Berkeley's 924 Gilman Street and being completely outnumbered. In 1989, they secured a permit to hold a 1989 "Aryan Woodstock" concert in Napa, California. Although the permit allowed they weren't able to play music. The attendance figures for the event numbered around 300 but television footage showed the Nazi skinheads to be vastly outnumbered by protesters. Throughout most of the 1990's Metzger was bogged down in the courts after his connection to the 1988 murder of an Ethiopian immigrant in Portland, OR. The latter part of the 90's into the 2000s Pierce proved to be more media savvy and more influential.

Resistance Records based in Detroit started in 1993 by George Eric Hawthorne (aka: George Brudi) of the National Socialist metal band, Rahowa, short for "Racial Holy War". Hawthorne was, also a member and aided by the racist U.S.-based World Church of the Creator.²⁵ He helped promote other

²⁴ Jenkins S.; Wilson E.; Mao, J.C.; Alvarez G.; and Rollins B., Anselmo quoted from Montreal concert in in *Ego Trip's Big Book of Racism*, Regan and HarperCollins, New York, 2002 p. 96.

²⁵ Southern Poverty Law Center report, 'Dangerous Liasons - White Pride Worldwide', *Intelligence Report*, Fall 2001, Montgomery, Alabama pg 3. (posted Fall 2001, viewed 1 October 2008), <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=328>

racist and Nazi bands such as Bound For Glory, Berserkr and the Angry Aryans. Rahowa themselves were known for running the gamut from metal epics to silly, albeit racist parodies of 50's rock n' roll songs ("Third Reich" done to the beat of Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls of Fire") with lyrics reading:

One, two, three, four/You kill all the niggers and you gas all the jews/ Kill a gypsie and a commie too
You just killed a kike/Don't it feel right?/Goodness gracious, Third Reich!

During the period of 1994-1997, Resistance had sold between 60,000 to 100,000 tapes and CDs. More than 40 record labels in Europe had licensing agreements with Resistance. Additionally, the blossoming of white power music in Sweden went from having only one concert in 1992 to 20 in 1995. During Hawthorne's leadership the label also was in contact with labels in Czech Republic, Poland, Yugoslavia, England, France, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Lithuania, Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary. Plus, Hawthorne made contacts with the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, Australia and even Japan. In 1997, Hawthorne was jailed on assault charges after beating up a female anti-racist in Ottawa, Canada.²⁶

In 1999, shortly after federal authorities in Michigan raided their headquarters on tax fraud, Pierce bought Resistance Records for \$250,000. He followed this purchase with the acquisition of the Swedish Nordland label and eventually began to seek out National Socialist Black Metal releases to add to their growing distribution. Additionally, the blossoming of white power music in Sweden went from having only one concert in 1992 to 20 in 1995.

Along with Rahowa and the previously mentioned Centurion, Resistance also released a series of other "white nationalist music" (featuring mostly folk and punk) compilations, which they handed to potentially sympathetic passers by in Tampa, Florida. Adhering to their "David Laneian" methodology, Resistance sells CDs at the "aryan friendly" price of \$14.88.

The label also attempted to send music to college radio stations, including where I am a volunteer DJ. Resistance sent music to Stanford University's KZSU, in 1998, Music director, Mike Howes, rejected adding the music not entirely based on its noxious ideas but more because "it sound just like bad punk – we've received plenty of that." Howes also told me that during this time there was a big debate around the station regarding whether or not they would add and play racist music on the air if the music itself was good. The station only received the one package from Resistance but in 2000 also randomly received a copy of Resistance Magazine. Interestingly, no representative from Resistance had followed up with us regarding it.

In the Fall 1999 issue of *Resistance* magazine, William Pierce discussed the label's significance:

Music speaks to us at a deeper level than books or political rhetoric: music speaks directly to the soul. Resistance Records ... will be the music of our people's renewal and rebirth. It will be music of strength and joy for our people. It will be music of defiance and rage against the enemies of our people.... It will be the music of the great, cleansing revolution which is coming. Enjoy it!"²⁷

Resistance was able to get a foothold into the metal scene by also using more traditional promotional tactics. They were able to set up a merchandise table at both the 1998 and 1999 Milwaukee MetalFests. Napalm Death who was on the bill for the 1999 MetalFest was surprised that the promoters gave an open forum to Resistance. As vocalist Barney Greenway said:

We were at Milwaukee MetalFest a few years ago and they had a store there. And it was like, what the hell was this? There were white power kids blatantly walking around and giving me the evils, you know, obviously, trying to provoke me.

This goes to promoters too. Hell, you make enough money. Show some integrity. Stop these people from coming in and infesting the scene.²⁸

²⁶ Intelligence Report, 'Present at the Creation – a key architect of the international white power music industry, recounts his personal odyssey in an interview,' *Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report*, Fall 2001, pgs. 34-35. This is the first post-prison interview Hawthorne gave. It's important to note that he left the white power movement behind and started a multi-racial band in Detroit during the time of this interview.

²⁷ Pierce quoted in 'Deafening Hate The Revival of Resistance Records – Destination Unknown' Anti-Defamation League report on Hate Rock, *adl.org*, (Updated 9 July 2008, viewed October 1 October 2008), http://www.adl.org/resistance_records/Destination_Unknown.asp

The Milwaukee Metalfest wasn't the only place where the National Alliance and Resistance Records worked at getting new recruits during major metal shows. They worked on the biggest tours: Ozzfest, the "Unholy Alliance" tour (featuring Slayer, Children of Bodom and Mastadon) and even Metallica. The latter of which sounds a bit strange considering half the band is Mexican and Filipino.

Other neo-Nazi groups like Pennsylvania-based Keystone State Skinheads have also used this tactic:

Members have been busy distributing promo materials, such as leaflets, CD's and stickers at local concerts. This has been an area of interest for some time and now it is starting to get some support and positive response. With help from suppliers like Label 56, Final Stand Records and Aryan Wear a number of us have been able to hand out stuff at large events with great success. Large numbers of patrons of events such as Sounds of the Underground Tour, Warped Tour, Ozzfest and many others have welcomed receiving the promotional material.²⁹

Also, the Keystone State Skinheads also promoted a live show in central Pennsylvania featuring racist death metal and black metal bands like Arghoslent and Wotanordern

Resistance and the White nationalist movement scored a media coup with the Bakersfield, California-based "child-folk" duo of Prussian Blue, have also been promoted by Resistance Records. The 14-year old twins, Lamb and Lynx Gaede are the daughters of National Vanguard affiliated writer April Gaede. The National Vanguard is a splinter group of the National Alliance. Prussian Blue was named after the residue in left in the gas chambers that has been brought up as "proof" of the lack of evidence in the Holocaust.³⁰

The duo sings songs like "Victory Day" an ode to Nazi Party Deputy, Rudolf Hess. Additionally, they have songs praising Robert Jay Matthews of the Order. Their album "Fragment of the Future" was released by Resistance. The twins received press worldwide ranging from hip publications like *Vice* to an interview on ABC-TV's *Good Morning America* – viewed by millions.

Russian thrash metal band Korrozia Metalla (Russian for "corrosion of metal") one of the biggest bands in the Russian metal scene. With albums selling 600,000 copies they've had a strong fan base inside and outside Russia. The group has been around since 1984, and is mostly known for their wild stage shows featuring topless dancers, mental patients, flying coffins and dwarves. If that wasn't odd enough, around 1993 they went the extreme-right route and wrote songs supporting Russian ultra-nationalist movements. One of their most provocative songs is "Kill the Sunarefa" which translates to "Kill the Arabs" or kill the "non-whites". The song was introduced by vocalist Sergei "Spider" Troitsky as a dedication "to all patriots who wage war against the southern Asiatic animals who poison our lives with their rotten fruits and vegetables and rape our women. Death to the *Sunarefa* is our anthem."³¹ The anti-Asian attitude is peculiar, as their website shows an Asian woman singing then stripping on stage with the band during a December 2007 concert.

The song is also featured on the newly released American CD & DVD version of the album "Russian Vodka". The album is distributed by the National Alliance-affiliated label Vinland Winds, run by Grimnir Wotansvolk (aka: Richard Mills) also distributed the album. Wotansvolk is best known as the vocalist for the racist Black Metal band, Grand Belial's Key. Although there is a mystery around the American version, considering that Wotansvolk died in late 2006 yet versions of it turned up first in distributors and stores in early 2008.

The advent of National Socialist Black Metal started around the mid-1990's prompted the idea of making things "more extreme than thou". Some felt that this was consistent in that if Black Metal was

²⁸ Andy, 'Barney says: "Grrrrriinnndddd fascism!', Interview with Barney Greenway of Napalm Death', *Slack Bastard Blogspot*, (30 December 2005, viewed 1st October, 2008), <http://slackbastard.blogspot.com/2005/12/barney-says-grrrrriinnndddd-fascism.html>

²⁹ Anon., no title, (19th July 2007 entry, viewed 1st October 2008), *Keystone State Skinheads* <http://www.kss88.com/current.html>

³⁰ Pearson, J., 'Hello, White People!', *Viceland.com*, and *Vice Magazine*, Volume 11, Number 10, (posted November 2004, viewed 29 September 2008), <http://www.viceland.com/int/v11n10/htdocs/hello.php>

³¹ Moynihan, M. and Soderlind, D., 'Eastern Europe – Russian & Poland', *Lords of Chaos*, first edition Feral House, Venice, California, 1998, p. 285.

anti-Christian why shouldn't it be against all other religions? As Ymir G. Winter of the band Grom describes this ideology:

In Black Metal you had most bands following the formula of anti-Christ(ian), kill the Christians... well what about the Jews? On a religious level Christianity's based on Judaism. On a different level – which NSBM takes it to, Jews are a race... I think that they're responsible for most of the wrongs in the world.³²

One of the biggest bands in NSBM is the Polish based Graveland. Founded in 1992 with a few demos then several albums released through the German label No Colours. Graveland's early work is pretty standard Black Metal with harsh vocals and fairly plain tremolo picking. The group's inspirations mostly from Bathory's later "Viking era" albums: "Hammerhart" and "Twilight of the Gods" along with the soundtrack to the movie Conan. While the group initially wrote about Satanism their founder Rob "Darken" Fudali, says otherwise:

"...as a part of Judeo- Christianity, Satanism is alien to the indigenous culture of our forefathers. Satanism should be rejected as a part of enemy propaganda. We have never been slaves of Judeo- Christianity and we will never be!"³³

Additionally, Graveland's "Blood of Heroes" EP from 2002 was released in the limited number of "Aryan pressings" of 1488 copies. The original copies were said to have included a dedication to Timothy McVeigh. Although, Fudali backed out when he believed it could get them unneeded attention for themselves and their label, Vinland Winds.³⁴ The Pagan Front, the largest hosting site on the Internet for NSBM bands and labels, has also supported Graveland. Graveland has additionally done split releases with the Polish Nazi skinhead band Honor as well as the German NSBM group Absurd.

The case of the band Absurd and their former leader and drummer, Hendrik Möbus is connected to much of the American and international white nationalist movement. In 1993, the 16-year-old Möbus along with two other members of Absurd murdered He and two other members of the band strangled and killed 14-year-old Sandro Beyer. Möbus spent 8 years in prison then was paroled in 1999. Still, his parole was revoked for giving a "sieg heil" salute in Germany. To make matters worse he dismissed the seriousness of his murder conviction while being interviewed in the book *Lords of Chaos*:

(Beyer is) an utterly irritating guy who became a pain in the ass... He has [sic] spread rumor and bullshit about ourselves, something we couldn't stand any longer. [...] it simply was a beneficial act for mankind.³⁵

Absurd also used Beyer's gravestone on the cover their 1995 "Thuringian Pagan Madness" tape. The tape was released by Capricornus Productions, run by Graveland's drummer Capricornus. After serving an additional 18-month sentence he ventured off into America. While in the U.S., Möbus, stayed in Seattle and Ohio, joining up with Nathan Pett, (Nate Zorn) of the esoteric fascist group, White Order of Thule. Along the way, Möbus ended up at the compound of the National Alliance in West Virginia. In August 2000 the Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) arrested Möbus for parole violation. During this proceedings, National Alliance and other white nationalist groups protested at the German embassy in Washington D.C. to free stop from being treated like a common prisoner. As Möbus claims: "The FRG (Federal Republic of Germany promises basic freedoms, but persecutes everyone who doesn't think and speak in a Politically Correct manner."³⁶

Regarding National Socialism, Möbus called it: "the most perfect synthesis of the Luciferian will-to-power, and neo-heathen principles and symbolism." National Alliance founder, William Pierce

³² Shipman, D., (interviewer) and Zebub, B. (producer and director), 'Grom interview', *Black Metal A Documentary* DVD. Clifton, New Jersey, (released 2007, viewed on 3 October 2008).

³³ Anon., 'The most interesting fragments of interviews with Darken', *Graveland's official website*. Quoted from *Aryan Genocide Propaganda 666* zine, Serbia (posted 2005, viewed 4 October 2008), <http://www.graveland.org>

³⁴ Skyclad (forum poster), 'Strangest album dedications you've seen?' *Blind-Guardian.com forum*, (Posted 23 January 2007, viewed 5 October 2008),

<http://www.blind-guardian.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=1112297&sid=84f913b21cc33a84f323505f6a7122a4>

³⁵ One People's Project, 'Hendrik Mobus (Incarcerated)', onepeoplesproject.com (updated 2 November 2005, viewed 1 October 2008),

http://onepeoplesproject.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=109&Itemid=33

³⁶ *ibid.*

provided legal aid for Möbus, raising over \$6000, it was to no avail. Regardless, the “Free Henrik Möbus campaign still appears on several white nationalist and NSBM affiliated websites such as Mourning The Ancient.

Even with Möbus back in prison, a version of Absurd is still recording and playing shows. The group played a show in Queens, NY along with other NSBM bands, Grand Belial’s Key and Cold Northern Vengeance. Due to many boycotts, most of these shows are secret and are promoted via invite only.

Nokturnal Mortum from the Ukraine is one of the other biggest NSBM bands. They formed in 1994 and have released songs such as “Taste of Victory” which they invoke David Lane’s ideas: “We do remember our forefather’s oaths/we do believe in power of 14 words”. Later in the same song they make a not so cloaked reference to Jews: “If they weren’t burnt those 60 years ago/they should be burnt today”. In 2007, Nokturnal Mortum teamed up for a 4-way split release called *Eastern Hammer*, invoking the Slavic version of the Norse god Thor, called Perun. The release features Russia’s Temnozor (Russian for “spirit of the sunrise”), Graveland and a Polish group called North.

Ultra-nationalism was the “elephant in the room” during the Soviet-era. Many of these movements barred from the public and when they did make an appearance they typically blamed on a “western capitalist conspiracy”. Many of the Eastern European and Russian bands link racism and ultra-nationalism with pagan Slavic identity. Similar to the Norse pantheon, the pre-Christian Slavic gods have been shunned from most accounts of history. However, unlike the Norse gods the official record of written sources is dubious. Also, early Russian Christians invented Cyrillic, the region’s first alphabet. However, Nordic runes are often mixed in with Cyrillic and German on many Russian and Ukrainian NSBM releases. Part of the usage of runes is due to the early Russian history of Swedish Vikings role in the cities of Kiev and Novgorod together with their explorations along the Dnieper and Volga rivers. After the Ukraine broke from the USSR, they issued several bank notes with Viking illustrations.

One possible explanation into Nokturnal Mortum’s attitude is the acceptance of anti-Semitism in the general population. This can be traced to recent headlines showing desecrations of synagogues in the city of L’viv. In August 2005, a major Kiev university presented former KKK leader and white nationalist David Duke a doctorate degree. MAUP (Ukrainian acronym for Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management) has 57,000 students and is considered one of the best colleges in Eastern Europe.³⁷ Duke’s dissertation was called “Zionism as a Form of Ethnic Supremacism”. Duke has also taught classes in at MAUP in history and international relations. Could Nokturnal Mortum’s anti-Semitism in the Ukraine also be a reflection of the anti-Semitism in the society in general?

Russia has also been at the forefront of NSBM. Many of these are under the banner of the label, Blazebirth Hall. Blazebirth affiliated bands include Forest, Raven Dark and Brainkald. Forest has release Within these bands are dozens of offshoots and side projects ranging from blunt force of Aryan Terrorism to the very 80’s sounding “power metal (i.e. Helloween) with an aryan face” of Finist.

In the two decades following end of the Soviet Union, Russia’s racism became public. The Moscow based Sova Center for Human Rights reported:

In the spring of 2007, radical violence continued to grow. Over the three spring months, xenophobic and neo-Nazi attacks affected at least 137 people, killing 18...there are no reasons yet to report improvement.³⁸

Music from bands like Graveland, Absurd, Nokturnal Mortum and many other like-minded bands can easily be found in record stores in the traditionally liberal cities of San Francisco and Berkeley, California. Aquarius Records in San Francisco’s Mission District and Amoeba Records in the city’s Haight-Ashbury district – mostly known as the focal point of the hippie-era “Summer of Love”.

³⁷ Anti-Defamation League, ‘Anti-Semitism International: Ukraine University of Hate, A backgrounder on MAUP (Interregional Academy of Personnel Management)’ *ADL.org*, (posted 3 November 2006, viewed 2 October 2008), http://www.adl.org/main_Anti_Semitism_International/maup_ukraine.htm

³⁸ Kozhevnikova, G., and Verkhovsky, A., ‘The Sowing Season in the Field of Russian Nationalism’, *Sova Center for Human Rights*, (posted 17 July 2007, viewed 8 October 2007), <http://xeno.sova-center.ru/6BA2468/6BB4208/9845B8F>

In my discussion with Aquarius Records owner Andee Connors, he said:

The whole NSBM is always a touchy subject. We actually try not to sell stuff that is obviously in your face racist, like records with swastikas all over 'em, or photos of the concentration camp ovens or any of that. We now usually put a big disclaimer in the review, so people who aren't super informed know what they're getting into.³⁹

Regarding customer reactions, Connors told me:

Reactions are mixed. We have this one young guy who won't buy anything with a whiff of NSBM about it. He's very careful and super conscientious. Then we have a couple older Jewish guys, who both wrestled over Burzum to begin with, but both eventually decided they love the music and have chosen to just ignore the politics.

I think that stuff is abhorrent, but a lot of the music is amazing. I'd say most of the Graveland(s) (albums) we sell 20-30 copies of. We've probably sold 50 of the (Nokturnal Mortum connected) Mistigo (Varragoroth Darkestra) over the years.⁴⁰

One of the Aquarius disclaimers reads:

Fair warning: (San Francisco Black Metal band) Lasoviec are on Dark Hidden Productions, a label with dubious political leanings, and with definite ties to the Pagan Front, the hub for all things NSBM aka: National Socialist Black Metal. Although the band seem to be more concerned with themes cosmic and spiritual, nature and mythology, there are definite racist implications, the link is undeniable, so regardless of the band's stance, the label's is clear, and thus, another instance where the listener has to decide if the music trumps the possible unpleasant politics.

One of the other more obvious points about NSBM not being a "true" subgenre of metal is that is purely aesthetic and ideological version. That is, it's merely black metal under the guise of being even more obnoxious and more "evil". It has no tempos, tuning, vocal styles or guitar tone that would separate it from say, Marxist black metal.

However, the phenomenon is spread out even more through downloading. Although, a band like Gorgoroth while very controversial for their blasphemous stage shows does not support NSBM. Guitarist Infernus said: "Nazism to me is a flock mentality...and at least Gorgoroth is individual and creating our own world out of chaos." *Metal-Archives.com*, lists 154 active NSBM bands. The topic is a hotly debated issue on Internet forums. Oddly enough, the majority of blogs focused on NSBM MP3 downloads are based in Chile and Mexico. Such blogs are littered with Third Reich and esoteric fascist symbols.

Much less influential but certainly still extreme is the left side of the politics. Within punk and hardcore it's very easy to find. However, in metal, bands that identify themselves with communist and anarchist ideology or at least emphasize with those sentiments are sometimes harder to find.

Revisiting Mayhem's Euronymous, we find that he came from the opposite yet equally totalitarian end of Vikernes - i.e. Stalinism. Euronymous was a member of Norway's Rød Ungdom (Red Youth) an organization up until the late 1990s supported the dictatorship of Enver Hoxa of Albania and the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia. Some members of Rød Ungdom even had dinner with Hoxa.

In Metal music this fusion of right and left extremes (even in the same band!) was something new. However, this had been going on within the fringes of politics for a long time. American fascist and author of the manifesto "Imperium", Frances Parker Yockey attempted to pursue a goal of uniting the Soviet Union with Germany during the 1950s and 1960s. Kevin Coogan's 1999 biography of Yockey explains his philosophy as a "Red-Brown alliance":

Yet periods of ideological decay often breed strange new variants, such as the 'Red-Brown alliance' in the

³⁹ Andee Connors, store@aquariusrecords.org, 'Re: Question about NSBM sales at your store', conversation via e-mail between myself and Connors, (received/posted 23 September 2008, viewed 23 September 2008).

former Soviet Union, which do not easily fit into conventional political-science categories of “left” and “right.”

Another example of this fusion is the Chicago black metal group Blood of Martyrs, whose claim to be occultic “Black Ram Anarchists”: “Drawing on a lifetime of metal and occult experience as well as an interest in altered and trance states, and aligning itself with pagan, environmentalist, and alternative political (Black Ram Anarchists)”. The Black Ram Anarchism is based around a concept called “Anarcho-Nationalism” which they describe as “the nationalism of the people (Volk) which in its more consistent expressions is a legitimate rejection of both foreign domination and internal authoritarianism, i.e. the State.”⁴¹

While death metal often features gory lyrics about murder, dismemberment and death, it does have a political component. The band Misery Index writes songs about class struggle, political and societal hypocrisy. Their 2008 album features titles like “Ruling Class Cancelled” and “Traitors” – which questions American styled hyper-patriotism via Fox News. Bassist/vocalist Jason Netherton and guitarist Sparky Voyles - came from the band Dying Fetus. Dying Fetus began playing basic blasting, fast Death Metal with lunkeheaded albeit typical death metal songs like “Raped on the Altar”. Since 2000 however, they have been decisively critical about American policies in the Middle East and about religion.

The UK’s Napalm Death is considered the pinnacle of grindcore. Grindcore is an extremely fast style that grew from the hardcore/punk scene. In the late 80’s there were numerous bands in the UK and Japan who were essentially playing “fast-core” which was, a tempo of Black Flag’s fastest song accelerated to 20 times as fast. At times people would call it “blur-core” but the Brits put their stamp on it and called it “grindcore” due to its near-mechanical grinding sound.

Napalm Death arose first from the anarcho-punk scene appearing on the Crass Records compilation “Bullshit Detector” in 1982. This early version of the band was mostly raw and loose sounding with an occasional use of tribal drumming. After several line up changes they decided to go much faster and in 1987 released “Scum” which featured the 1.3 second song “You Suffer”. In later years the band had more line up changes but continued to forge the path of Grindcore and never gave up their political ideas. The band is well known worldwide and continues to be a huge influence on Grindcore to this day. Their activism has included appearing on benefit compilations for AK Press, Anti-Racism Action, Southeast Asian Tsunami Relief. Plus, the group has appeared in ad campaigns for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Former Dead Kennedy’s vocalist and activist, Jello Biafra did guest vocals on their 2005 song “The Great And The Good”.

The band Carcass while not overtly political, originated through Napalm Death and via the anarcho punk scene. One of the members mentioned the reasoning behind their gory album art on the album “Symphonies of Sickness” was to show that “the human meat is no different than the animal meat.” Their vegan/vegetarian and anti-meat concepts were less political and much more graphic with titles like “Exhume to Consume”. Their influence was also much less political and for better or worse gave rise to the death metal/grindcore offshoot called “goregrind”.

Brutal Truth is equivalent to the American version of Napalm Death. They play with lots of insanely fast songs, screamed out vocals and plenty of blast beats. The band was formed by ex-Anthrax and S.O.D. bassist Dan Lilker. The group was credited for creating the world’s shortest ever music video for the song “Collateral Damage” which is a scant 2.18 seconds. Their 1992 song “The Birth of Ignorance”, from their debut “Extreme Conditions Demand Extreme Responses” has lyrics like: “Ignorance and prejudice/Raping peoples minds/Molded by environment/Hatred of all kinds.” The group has also done experiments with techno/industrial sounds and even cover avant-garde jazz artist, Sun Ra. When asked about his activism, vocalist Rich Hoak said:

Brutal Truth is the main focus of our lives and our lives are our political activism. We try to spread our message and hopefully shake up a few people and maybe in the end it will do the globe some good.⁴²

⁴¹ Blood Of Martyrs info quoted from their official MySpace page. (Last updated 7 October 2008, viewed 5 October 2008), <http://www.myspace.com/bloodofmartyrs>

⁴² Dead Angel webzine, ‘BLABBING WITH BRUTAL TRUTH (FROM DEAD ANGEL # 30)’ (updated 21 August 2008, viewed 8 October 2008), http://www.monotremata.com/dead/archive/interviews/brutaltruth_interview.html

Another important left-leaning Grindcore band is the Orange, County, CA based, Phobia. Formed in 1990, they have played shows with everything from Death Metal to Crust Punk to Sludge Rock bands. Their t-shirts bare the slogan "Total Anarchist Grindcore". When asked about the Bush administration's foreign policy, vocalist Shane McLachlan said:

This is going to be the worst year, it's the last term of Bush. So he has to make it all happen, that means a lot of dead people. This is what we have to wait for. He has an objective for all the rich bastards and his family ideas, so this is the year we need an assassination!!!⁴³

One of their songs "Never" takes an anti-patriotic stance: "I'm a flag burner from the USA/I don't give a fuck what you say!!!/No cloth gives you freedom/No cloth gives you pride."

While many grindcore bands veer to the left, it is also important to note that's not always the case. In 2001, the Australian band Rupture released a 7" called "Soap Farm" with photos of holocaust victims. The title and cover were obvious references to Nazism and the Holocaust. However, the band seemed to want to do the old, traditional punk thing and "piss off everyone at once." Despite having the flipside called "Das Waffen SS" the band still tried to clear the air:

It has come to our attention that since all the P.C. close minds out there seem to love spreading bullshit bullshit about us, calling us "nazis" I guess we may as well act like Nazis so fuck you, make of this this release as you will. At least we can still take the piss and laugh at all you insecure retarded yuppie peacenik bible thumping diatribal wank. Anyway we all know who the REAL nazis are!!!

The group previous released split 7-inch singles with Brutal Truth and the anarchist Drop Dead. Also, aside from the "Soap Farm" single the crux of the band's lyrics had to do with pornographic sex and drugs. They were more comfortable in promoting filthy scum rockers like G.G. Allin than fascist leaders like Adolf Hitler.⁴⁴

If Rupture wasn't enough extreme obnoxiousness then there's always Anal Cunt whose name alone sets them apart from a million other bands. Musically they create ultra-blurs of noise and grindcore. Their early releases had no titles and went so far as to having a 5643 Song EP pressed on 7-inch vinyl. The release is unofficial world record but it's still unverified. Essentially how it works is 16 different songs can be heard at once and each song is less than 2 seconds. Regardless of the studio trickery, Anal Cunt became much more offensive than their high school parking lot name. Almost every one of the band's releases is filled with endless screaming and raging against things they deem "gay" or "retarded". When they're not taking that angle, they're making fun of rape and promoting sexism.

In 1999, the group released the aptly titled "It Just Gets Worse" with song titles like "Body By Auschwitz" and "I Sent Concentration Camp Footage to America's Funniest Home Videos". When asked about the controversy over Mel Gibson's "Passion of the Christ" movie, vocalist Seth Putnam said:

(Jews) all deserved to be fuckin' killed...he shoulda got an award for sayin' that shit...they never shut the fuck up about the Holocaust they always whine about it...we have a song called "Hoggin' up the Holocaust" - how they get all the credit for the holocaust.⁴⁵

While much of Black metal has been influenced or supported by the ultra-right, there is a number of leftist and anarchist leaning bands. Wolves In The Throne Room from Olympia, Washington is one of the most significant ones. The band's philosophy is more akin to eco-anarchist notions of living close to the earth and radical primitivism. Although this has brought the group much criticism:

We hear about how we live from other people all the time and it's usually an exaggeration coming from people who either kind of idealize their conception of what we're doing, think we're "unkvlt (i.e. "not

⁴³ Frostkamp, 'Phobia Interview', *Frostkamp e-zine*, (posted 5 August 2008, viewed 4 October 2008), <http://frostkamp.wordpress.com/2008/08/05/phobia-interview/>

⁴⁴ Rupture, 'statement regarding "Soap Farm" single' quoted from *Rupture official site* (posted 2001, viewed 5 October 2008), <http://www.thrashyourface.com/rupture/soap.html>

⁴⁵ Capital Chaos TV, 'ANAL CUNT on CAPITAL CHAOS TV 2007', *YouTube.com* (posted 18 April 2007, viewed 3rd October 2008) Sacramento, CA linked at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngRr_x36Ess

true black metallers) hippie posers...⁴⁶

Additionally, the one-man band SorgSvart (Norwegian for "Black Sorrow" or "Black Grief") is the flipside of Burzum. SorgSvart is a Norwegian band that supports Anarchy and stands against "authoritarian and despotic ideologies". SortSvart also had help on their 2008 "Vikingtid og Anarki" ("Viking Time and Anarchy") from Darkthrone's Nocturno Culto. Culto's appearance on the album maybe seems odd considering Darkthrone's *Transilvanian Hunger*-era alluded to earlier.

Other bands of the anarchist black metal ilk include Order of the Vulture, Fall of the Bastards both from Portland, Oregon with anti-Christian lyrics from a more anti-state, anti-authoritarian perspective. Also, a number of the anarcho-punk collective, CrimeThinc's bands were often metal leaning. A notable band was Timebomb, who were described as: "Italian, vegan straight edge, anarcho-communist black metal".

There are numerous bands that believe in and support extreme political ideologies. Although, there are those like the early punks that have courted controversy simply by the way they look or by certain images they use. Sometimes a band just *writing* about World War II can be controversial. Specifically, Hail of Bullets 2008 debut, "Frost and War" came out with a promo photo showing 3 out of 5 band members with shaved heads. This along with the fact that the band employed an angular font used on nearly every paperback "political thriller" (see Clive Cussler) provoked strong reactions. Drummer Ed Warby tried to clarify matters in an interview with Nocturnal Cult e-zine:

We've already been called communists as well as fascists by some less than intelligent individuals, but in general people are smart enough to see there's nothing in our lyrics to justify either accusation. I realize a band made up of bald guys wearing combat clothing releasing a war album may seem dubious to some, but anyone who takes the time to actually read the lyrics will find appearances to be most deceiving in this case. Martin is a raving pacifist, and he definitely did not set out to glorify war in any way, quite the opposite.⁴⁷

The Swedish black metal band Marduk also caught flak for creating albums named *Panzer Division Marduk*, which can be seen as nebulous as the "Slaytanic Wehrmacht" of Slayer. Marduk also used a Swedish World War II era tank on the cover. Morgan Håkansson in an interview with Terrorizer said his band wants to give the listening "feel like they're being overrun, like they're under a Blitzkrieg of sound". It's important that Håkansson says, "of sound" versus "we should launch a Blitzkrieg against Israel and New York City". Again, he only speaks of creating an extreme sound environment. On their 2005 album "Plague Angel" they have a track "The Hangman of Prague". The song deals with Nazi henchman in the Czech capitol in World War II, Richard Heydrich. Håkansson takes a similar view of Slayer in defending his interest and not endorsement of the subject:

I write music according to what interests and fascinates me. I can't control it; if I read about something or watch a documentary, that creates interest in my head...we're not singing about trolls, we're singing about things that actually happened and events that actually took place.⁴⁸

Regarding the band's totalitarian symbolism of eagles and stoic buildings, Håkansson says:

It's strange, because over the years we've sung about so many historical happenings. We did the whole Vlad (the Impaler) thing ['Nightwing' 1999], we had song titles in French, we had songs in Romanian and no-one said a word. But as soon as we do something in German the whole world explodes.

Also, the German band Endstille has gotten into trouble simply for using WWII imagery and also the more obvious troubling to many title of "Endstille's Reich"

You may see a tank or a plane or a machine gun, but that's just history, and it's history that inspires us. We use that imagery to provoke thought and discussion. We're against anything remotely related to

⁴⁶ H., Marcel, 'Wolves In The Throne Room - To Those Who Accuse WITTR Of Right Wing Sympathies' *metalstorm.ee* (Posted by 4 February 2008, viewed 5 October 2008),

http://www.metalstorm.ee/events/news_comments.php?news_id=5949&page=&message_id=

⁴⁷ Smith, B. 'Interview with Ed of Hail of Bullets' *Nocturnal Cult webzine*, (posted 2008, viewed 7 October 2008), <http://www.nocturnalcult.com/newcontents.htm>

⁴⁸ Tracey, C., 'Scourge Overkill', *Terrorizer*, Issue #128, 2005, London, pgs. 16 and 18.

Nazism. When we're playing, we want to create the atmosphere of war. Our new album, 'Endstilles Reich', has a photo of a church taken in 1946...it has nothing to do with the Third Reich. What "reich" means in this context is "home" or "place".⁴⁹

In addition, the band played Vienna's "Metal For Fairness" benefit, the proceeds of which went to building schools in Cambodia. Not exactly "National Socialist" material. Also, the imagery of Endstille's album covers are similar to that in virtually any Time-Life series on World War II - wartorn cities, anti-aircraft guns, the sinking of the Bismark - mere images telling a story minus any ideology.

In summary, the history of metal along with several other types of music is connected to a lot of political controversy. Whether that is something we choose to support, disdain or debate is entirely up to us. As fans, musicians, radio DJs and writers we have the ability to make these choices. These topics have been a hot button issue inside and out of the Metal scene and will likely to be that way for many years to come.

⁴⁹ Smit, J. 'Wrath From Above - CoC chats with Mayhemic Destructor of Endstille' *Chronicles of Chaos.com*, (posted 4 November 2007, viewed 7 October 2008), http://www.chronicsofchaos.com/articles/chats/1-1018_endstille.aspx

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