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ROCKIN' THE TRITONE: GENDER, RACE & THE AESTHETICS OF AGGRESSIVE HEAVY METAL SUBCULTURES

by

KIRK MISHRELL

Under the Direction of John McMillian

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the dynamics of two regional heavy metal styles. It focuses on the aesthetics of Florida death metal and Norwegian black metal. This paper seeks to contribute but also deviate from the great studies linking music with cultural studies. Heavy metal has gained international attention from many social leaders concerned with the direction of its listeners. Heavy metal, from its early foundation, has been used to rebel against social order. As the music evolves, it becomes dangerous to the social establishment; challenging ideologies such as religion, globalization, feminism and common decency. This paper seeks to tell the story of the battle between hegemony and the subversive subculture of intense metal, giving voice to some truly disturbed individuals dissatisfied with the existing social institution. In doing so, I hope this study serves as model for future studies of radical youth culture.

INDEX WORDS: Cultural studies, Death metal, Black metal, Heavy metal

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KIRK MISHRELL

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by

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May 2012

DEDICATION

To Meagan and My Parents

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Thanks to those who have helped me with this thesis and my academic career. In particular, I would like to thank my advisor, John McMillian as well as Alexander Cummings. They have both helped make this possible.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous thought-provoking and effective approaches to exploring history. Some scholars write theoretically informed works, while others simply tell the stories of unexplored historical events. Another approach to history is through the idea of "rebellion." Many scholars acknowledge this approach in a variety of histories. Marxist scholars tend to view history in terms of class and the struggle against the bourgeois socioeconomic order. Labor historians often prefer to view history in employee-labor relations, and the struggles of workers against economic elites. Feminist historians prefer to view history in terms of the fight against a patriarchal society and the struggle for gender autonomy. And historians of race prefer to view history as a constant fight for equal rights in a white dominated society. Of course there are obvious variations within these thematic fields, but many types of histories are written from the viewpoint of the marginalized in an attempt to show certain social inequalities in any given culture.

The past has seen many different social groups rebel against the established order, and historians have captured their stories using a variety of approaches. Groups such as the hippies, rockers, punks, bikers, and many more have all espoused particular ideologies that have contested social norms and all have had their stories effectively told. In the 1960s, for example, student radicals and disaffected female scholars challenged an overwhelmingly male dominated society, triggering a long overdue feminist movement. These young radicals additionally challenged the notion of war, promoting a much needed pacifist coalition that redirected collective matters involving foreign affairs. A decade later, punk rockers challenged the bourgeois establishment by embracing a "do-it-yourself" ethic, temporarily solidifying their independence. They launched an ambitious campaign against the capitalistic establishment that challenged the record industry as well as a hierarchical class-based social order. Although not as successful as hippies and stu-

dent radicals in redefining dominant social order, punk rock laid the foundations for future rebellious subculture inclined to aggressive music.

Most acts of rebellion trigger a response from dominant social leaders. After the 1960s counterculture, for example, society witnessed the birth of the New Right which called for increased military spending, declared a war on drugs, and rekindled the energies of evangelicals. Society also witnessed a dramatic rise in an unyielding and repressive social culture aimed at curbing and controlling rebellious youth groups such as biker clubs, inner-city hip hop cultures, drug experimenting adolescents, and anarchistic punks.[1] Although some subcultural groups are more effective than others in redefining the status quo, many youth groups are unsuccessful in their campaign and fall victim to a counterrevolution.

Much academic work has been done in an attempt to highlight and historicize these particular groups and how they challenged normative conventions. Paul Willis, for example, successfully highlights hippy and biker groups in his work *Profane Cultures*.[2] Sarah Thornton illustrates how dance clubs and discotheques contributed to subculture discourse in *Club Cultures*.[3] In an effort to continue the discourse on contemporary subcultures, I have chosen to highlight a largely neglected subculture. The youth culture of heavy metal is something that I believe should be explored because of its tremendous popularity. Also, the enormous international attention the genre has attracted merits a scholarly response. Heavy metal challenged traditional social customs such as Christian ethos and ideas about propriety, while rejecting many newly reached progressive agendas such as feminism and the celebration of cultural and social diversi-

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[1] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: The New Press, 2010). Although Michelle Alexander does not directly address punks and bikers, her argument transcends hip hop and drug cultures.
[2] Paul Willis, *Profane Cultures*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
[3] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

ty. This was accomplished by embracing the antithesis of such values. Heavy metal, additionally, rebelled against shared societal convictions by celebrating hedonistic and nihilistic behaviors. Social leaders felt album artwork and song lyrics portrayed misogynistic and sadomasochistic themes as well as advocated drug use -- thereby deeming it a threat to the collective social establishment. Although such conduct is evident within the heavy metal milieu, I believe there is an alternate reason for such intensive controversy. When social values are threatened by unorthodox behaviors presented within heavy metal subculture, conflict becomes inevitable.

In this essay, I will highlight and discuss two particular genres of heavy metal considered the most controversial. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the swamp lands of the American South witnessed the birth of death metal in Florida with acts such as Deicide, Morbid Angel, Obituary and Cannibal Corpse gaining international notoriety. This radical subgenre of metal challenged many traditional notions, not only of musical acoustics, but also values of proper behavior and religious hegemony. The other variety of metal that I would like to explore is Norwegian black metal. This subgenre has brought about intense controversy similar to that of death metal. Norwegian black metal, however, possesses its own unique characteristics that challenge the establishment in many different ways. It is important not only to discuss this topic in terms of style, attire, sound, and behavior and how these dimensions contrast with conventional society, but also to illuminate how these particular subgenres challenged more serious matters of free expression. This thesis explores and theorizes the subcultures of death and black metal, showing how they challenge dominant culture in terms of collective and acceptable ideology, and how this interaction relates to larger issues of religious struggle, nationalism, gender and race. This interaction gives evidence that both genres possess an avant-garde aestheticism that additionally needs to be explored and analyzed.

In response to the "so what" question that historians are concerned with (that is, how does one's research contribute to contemporary scholarship?) a couple notions come to mind. First, I believe when any culture directly challenges the status quo in relation to gender and racial matters, thereby provoking a response, it merits academic concern. Second, historians and other scholars have done an excellent job observing how many cultures contend with religious hegemony. Many scholars, however, seem to neglect the topic of youth culture (especially heavy metal) and its struggle against religious dominance, discarding it as crass and irrelevant. Throughout history, in every corner of the world, one can witness how various secular groups and minority religions have struggled to express their unpopular beliefs and practices. In the United States alone, many religious and political leaders neglect to recognize the fundamental right of freedom to worship. Many social leaders and conservative groups such as The American Center for Law and Justice even threatened legal means to prevent Islamic mosques from being built in Lower Manhattan and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, contradicting the right to purchase private property and worship freely.[4] I additionally find it compelling how some groups voluntarily submit themselves to particular religious ideologies, while others overtly oppose these beliefs. As one will witness within the following chapters, heavy metal clearly opposes Christian principles. In doing so, however, heavy metal enthusiasts espouse an alternative ideology that needs to be examined and contrasted with Christianity. In many ways, this substitute ideology is hypocritical and threatens the sacred right of freedom of worship, expression, and speech.

Additionally, it seems there is an overall academic neglect of heavy metal. Some scholars such as Robert Walser and Deena Weinstein have taken up the subject, but for the most part, historians of musical subculture tend to ignore it. The scholars that do engage with the topic tend

[4]Reshma Kirpalani, "Ground Zero Mosque Clears Legal Hurdle to Build," *ABC WorldNews With Diane Sawyer*, July 13, 2011, http://abcnews.go.com/US/ground-mosque-wins-legal-battle-build/story?id=14062701 (accessed 4/2/2012.

to focus on heavy metal's early foundation. Major players, such as Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden, are likely to receive some attention, but the period since 1980 is largely ignored.

There has been, however, some recent and modest attention given to post-1980 aggressive Heavy Metal. Keith Kahn-Harris, author of *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge,* started the intellectual discourse on extreme metal from a global perspective.[5] His sociological and anthropological work on various global metal movements is certainly a valuable contribution to the topic of aggressive metal. Additionally, Natalie Purcell, author of *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture,* provides an excellent overview of the international death metal movement. She investigates certain demographic tendencies, ideals, values and behavioral characteristics apparent in death metal music as well as an excellent chapter on "moral panics" (such as content regulation and censorship) as they relate to the music scene.[6]

This paper, however, deviates from the themes discussed by the various authors who have contributed to the study of heavy metal. This essay discusses two specific styles of radical heavy metal and situates the genres within their regional contexts. The social and political environments that surrounded these radical musical cultures help explain their ascendency and popularity. The geographical areas of Florida and Norway will be discussed at length as a cause for the eruption of these scenes as these two groups are, in my opinion, the founding fathers of radical metal. They had a tremendous impact on future metal sounds and styles and are therefore important to analyze in detail.

In order to accomplish this task, I will continuously return to the notion of rebellion. Although the various thematic fields listed in the beginning of this chapter accurately depict the characteristics of rebellion in history, I believe the subculture method championed by the schol-

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[5] Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007).
[6] Natalie Purchell, *Death Metal Music: The Passion and Politics of a Subculture*, (London: McFarland & Company, 2003)

ars from the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies successfully codifies the merits of rebellion in history. *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* is considered, by many, to be the manifesto of the subcultural method. It is here that authors John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts outline this approach to history. The basic premise of the method (sketched in a rather rudimentary form) is that the dominant culture dictates certain collective policies, rituals, and laws because it has the means to do so (whether monetary, military or legal). Dominant figures within any given culture tend to be comprised of politicians, parental figures and pious leaders. Subordinate classes and cultures tend to remain at a marginal distance in a hierarchal society. Many subordinate groups, in order to obtain power and social recognition, attempt to challenge the dominant culture and its ideology through a variety of means. When these actions occur, a "moral panic" erupts, causing social instability. Usually these social disturbances are put down, and in other instances these insurrections result in compromise. Rarely does the subordinate civil disobedience successfully usurp dominant culture.[7]

Dick Hebdige is an additional scholar who will be referenced throughout this essay. His important notion of "style" within subculture and how it is "pregnant with significance" when investigating the semiotic practices and identities inside subculture, will be analyzed and mimicked in this paper as it relates to heavy metal.[8]

This essay will consist of two chapters. Chapter One will thoroughly examine Florida death metal sound and its musical distinctiveness. This will lead to a discussion of the genres style in terms of masculinity, violence and Satanism, and the social response from community leaders. Finally, I will discuss death metal as it relates to the state of Florida. The changing de-

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[7] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson & Brian Roberts, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (Hutchinson & Co 1976), 40.
[8] Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style (London: Routledge, 1979), 18.

mographics of Florida during the 1970s and 1980s are of particular importance when analyzing social culture during this epoch.

Chapter Two tackles the issue of Norwegian black metal. This chapter will carefully examine the foundations of black metal in terms of sound, image and attire. The chapter will also discuss black metal in relation to religion, which is of particular significance. Although heavy metal, in general, is a cultural response to Christianity, black metal youth and the Christian establishment have a very unique and turbulent relationship. The examination of black metal as it relates to religion will segue to other important issues such as nationalism, gender and race.

I intend for this work not only to contribute to the study of musical cultures, but additionally to provide general readers, interested in this particular social movement, with approachable and interesting academic material. As one will witness within the following chapters, heavy metal is certainly a convoluted and tumultuous musical genre. The material that follows may even provoke the interest of readers who are skeptical about the idea that heavy metal warrants serious scholarly attention.

2. COOKIE MONSTER, COUSIN ITT AND THE CREATION OF FLORIDA DEATH METAL

Every year, people gather in Nashville, Tennessee to witness one of the biggest nights in county music. The CMT (Country Music Television) Music awards, where fans vote for their favorite country music videos, is an event that truly represents popular music. In recent years, artists such as Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood and Toby Keith have been fortunate enough to capture the emotions of American country fans and win the Video of the Year.[9] The popularity of this event clearly represents a strong national interest in county music. It seems that Southerners in particular share a strong passion for this style of music. In fact the Country Music Hall of Fame is also located in Nashville, Tennessee, which has been the industry's hub since the beginning. The Grand Ole Opry, a notable Southern venue, is a place "dedicated to honoring country music's rich history."[10] Prominent artists throughout the South have shared the stage of the Opry, including Bill Anderson, Garth Brooks and Dolly Parton.

If country music is indeed "Southern" music, then a few questions come to mind: Do the CMT awards and these various artists truly represent Southern music? If one were to define the sound of Southern music, what would the definition be? Is it the twangy sounds of a slide guitar? Is it the impressive fast picking of a banjo? Perhaps it is the sound of an Appalachian man playing his fiddle accompanied by clogging and other dance activities? Although difficult to define, it appears these characteristics represent the collective notions of Southern music. It is music that holds a special place in the hearts of people within the American South, despite its na-

[9] Country Music Television, http://www.cmt.com/cmt-music-awards/about.jhtml, (accessed March 15, 2012).
[10] Grand Ole Opry, http://www.opry.com/about/index.html, (accessed March 15, 2012).

tionwide popularity. It also appears to be music truly distinguishable from the remaining country at large. In fact the American South, as a region, is an area defined as something distinctive within the larger country. Historically, the American South has been defined as a region within a larger region, or the "other" America. It is often labeled as a land with distinctive values, cultures and principles very much behind (or at least different) from the rest of the country.[11] It appears Southern music is no exception.

As the South approached the late twentieth century, however, traditional Southern music became less overwhelmingly present, allowing other styles and sounds to develop within the region. These new styles that emerged during this era weakened the monopolistic hold of old-fashioned Southern music. As the South modernized, many new musical cultures inundated the region, linking its music and culture with the remaining country. As the following pages will suggest, however, the South additionally produced certain musical styles that challenged not just the musical sounds and cultures of the Old South, but the entire country at large.

In the 1950s blues artists such as Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters and Chuck Berry paved the way for rock 'n' roll and initiated an early break with the old Southern past. Later, Elvis Presley embraced this unique style, launching the genre into international prominence. Although the South played a major role in the foundation of rock 'n' roll, it appears the movement was more a national rather than regional success, with cities such as Cleveland, New York and Chicago playing an important role in its early formation.

Soon after, the British Invasion of the early 1960s and later psychedelic rock of the late 1960s, triggered the rise of southern rock icons such as Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers and The Marshall Tucker Band. These musicians embraced the new global rock movement, but added an element of Southern flair. This movement is important because it demonstrates the de-

[11] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of The South*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

cline of traditional Southern music. Southern rock artists were able to embrace some aspects of modern music despite being confined to certain Southern nationalistic attitudes and styles.[12]

As the next decade approached, Southern musicians experimented with the aggressive sounds of punk rock and American hardcore. Southern bands such as Corrosion of Conformity, DRI (Dirty Rotten Imbeciles) and MDC (Millions of Dead Cops) embraced the national underground movement of American hardcore. Although not an authentic regional movement, it nonetheless represented a stark contrast with old style Southern music. It appears that musicians during this stage of Southern music finally embraced a national underground movement. In a sense, these Southern bands were more "American hardcore," rather than something truly unique to the South.

As the 1980s came to a close, however, a newer and more extreme musical style emerged. As with the punk rock and American hardcore movements, this genre runs counter to many antiquated sounds and styles in not just the American South, but the United States as a whole. Known for blasphemous lyrics and chaotic musical sounds, death metal emerged within the swamplands of Florida. This chapter tells the story of death metal as a national movement that began in the South. The modern South, especially Florida, facilitated a movement that launched its members into international infamy.

Although death metal music is apparent in various regions throughout the globe, the initial and most influential bands, such as Death, Morbid Angel, Obituary, Deicide and, later, Cannibal Corpse (originally from Buffalo but relocated to Florida), emerged or gained success in Florida. Chuck Schuldiner, the lead guitarist and vocalist for Death, is credited by many metal

[12] Mike Butler, "Lord, Have Mercy On My Soul: Sin, Salvation, and Southern Rock." *Southern Cultures* 9 (Winter, 2003): 73-87.

enthusiasts as the father of death metal music.[13] This new sound and style created a loyal and rampant youth following. This subculture compounded the initial controversial elements of early heavy metal, taking it to a new, more subversive level. Florida death metal not only challenged collective notions of acceptable behavior and ideology; it also challenged traditional elements of musical sound. The controversial themes of aggression, sexism and the occult celebrated among its followers during the first wave of heavy metal evolved and became even more radical during the latter stage of heavy metal subculture. Though there is no doubt that other bands played an important role in the foundation of extreme music, the Florida scene was the site of its origin. It was the region that gave birth to the genre's notorious reputation and is therefore important when demonstrating death metal authenticity.

The topic of death metal subculture has certainly been neglected within the scholarly community; it is not entirely clear why this is the case, however. It might be attributed to the crude and grotesque ideology death metal espouses, or it's chaotic and often misunderstood musical sound. Or perhaps because such extreme cultures challenge and seek to reverse the course of hard-fought progressive values such as gender equality. Whatever the reason, I believe death metal subculture can be used to highlight larger social issues and is therefore worthy of critical and academic investigation. Investigating heavy metal allows us to learn how subcultures contend and cope with censorship, gender, and theology. Studying rebellious youth cultures also helps us better understand the social majority. Popular values and ideologies are tested when civil disobediences occur. How a dominant culture responds to such acts of rebellion provides an individual with a view of society's moral character. Does society overreact and violently eradicate insurrectional movements, or does society reform and adapt in an effort to appease and

[13] Patricia Renda, "Chuck Schuldiner, The pain of a genius," Metal Rules, 1999, http://www.metal-rules.com/interviews/chuck.htm (accessed 4/2/2012).

accommodate dissenting points of view? This chapter will tackle these issues and others divided in four sections.

In order to fully understand this subculture and its motivations, it is pertinent to highlight the aural aestheticism of death metal. The musical sound of death metal challenged popular or "mainstream" notions of music in a distinctive way. An excessive virtuosic element along with an unorthodox vocal component is conspicuous in death metal music and contradictory to most forms of popular music, especially those of the American South.

After a working definition of death metal sound is established, it becomes important to highlight the genre's style and its "dual meaning." Members of the subculture consider certain stylistic and behavioral traits of metal to be both liberating and insurrectional. These same characteristics, however, are abhorred by individuals outside the culture. Thus death metal's ability to function as a catalyst of cultural polarization becomes significant by allowing us a point of juxtaposition that facilitates a better understanding of its style. This approach permits a comprehensive look at the death metal subculture and its deliberate deviation from conventional culture.

It then becomes important to highlight the response from the dominant culture against the radical messages propagated by proponents of death metal. The "moral panic" that erupted shortly after the emergence of death metal triggered a call to action. Various political and religious figures attempted to censor death metal music hoping it would protect American youth.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with an analysis of death metal as it relates to the American South. Although the entire chapter acknowledges death metal as it relates to this region, this final section goes into more detail, highlighting some of the social and political changes occurring during this era that help explain the ascendancy of death metal.

Death Metal Music: Musical Vanguard or Vociferous Rubbish?

Anthropologically speaking, music is a major factor in cultural observation. It can be used to evaluate popular taste, values and rituals. There are always certain classes or groups of individuals, however, who feel that popular music neglects or does not represent their true ideologies. These are the sorts of people who feel that mainstream music does not capture their emotional concerns. As a result, musical subcultures are formed.

Imaginative figures such as the Parisian vanguardist Erik Satie and American jazz artist Jelly Roll Morton are great examples. They have consistently challenged popular music through the creation of unique sounds, producing music that speaks to their beliefs, styles and emotions. In the 1950s, Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters and other inventive individuals from the Delta of Mississippi created the sound of rock ’n’ roll, thought to be truly unique at the time.

The late 1970s and early 1980s gave birth to heavy metal, death metal’s antecedent. This musical culture espoused nihilistic and hedonistic tendencies contradictory to previous musical cultures such as the hippies that celebrated feelings of pacifism and love. The metal milieu expressed and, in many instances, celebrated violence, misogyny and the occult. Bands such as Iron Maiden, Motorhead, Judas Priest, AC/DC and Mötley Crüe propagated these rebellious messages through their unique lyrics and deafening musical sounds. Around the same era, punk rock music continued this trend of rebellion by advancing a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) ethic, solidifying their independence from corporate record labels. During this era, music was reduced to a style that deemphasized talent and creativity while resurrecting the diminishing but critical elements of protest, passion and attitude.

The controversial style of death metal evolved from these rebellious trends. It continued and augmented these creative and insubordinate styles in music. It was a musical genre that truly

deviated from mainstream or popular sound. But what was "mainstream" music around this time and how did death metal rebel against it?

Of course, various mainstream styles of music existed during the late decades of the twentieth century. The final stages of disco were prevalent as well as R&B, rock and the emergence of hip hop. As always, the American South produced and celebrated numerous country and bluegrass artists. Although these genres composed some great musical works, few popular artists really challenged traditional musical composition. Many artists used computerized beats to product music, while popular rock music followed the same *verse-chorus-verse-chorus* formula. With the exception of hip hop, it seemed as if most American music neglected a rebellious spirit.

As previously mentioned, punk rock emerged in the late 1970s, challenging not only major record labels and their monopolistic hold on the industry, but also musical composition. This was accomplished by minimizing the importance of technical components previously needed to write and play music while implementing a harsh vocal style that blatantly mocked the harmonies within popular music. The popular phrase "learn three chords and then start a band" helps capture the rebellious efforts of the punk rock community during this era of music. Additionally, punk rockers felt popular music neglected a call-to-action message. Despite a valiant effort, however, punk eventually lost its avant-garde characteristic. This first wave of punk brought about mass commercialization, limiting its insurrectional ingredient after being embraced by popular culture.

Punk rock was designed to be an "anti-establishment" musical style. It opposed corporate recording labels, popular fashion and mainstream musical culture. The music was intended to be a public mockery, a shocking display of rebellion, a provocative spectacle. When the mu-

sic gained popularity, it lost these authentic elements. When the former anti-establishment became the establishment, it lost all credibility and ultimately failed.

Punk rock, however, regained its subcultural potency and musical aestheticism. The surfacing of American hardcore music rekindled the rebellious components of punk rock. As described by Steven Blush in *American Hardcore*, the music blended original punk rock attitudes with relentless fast tempos and harsh vocal styles while staying true to an independent ethic. This culture and sound had a tremendous impact on future subcultural sensations and dramatically influenced the outlook of live performances.[14] Additionally, American hardcore greatly influenced future musical subcultures especially that of Florida death metal.

In *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk,* Steve Waksman argues that musical genres proliferate and blossom interdependently of one another.[15] This observation carries special force when reviewing the ascendency of death metal. The harsh musical elements, insurrectional attitudes, and a "do-it-yourself" ethic that foreground the punk rock agenda are all apparent within the death metal subculture. Furthermore, the genre adopted the fast tempos and loud elements apparent in hardcore but rejected the limited instrumental technicality, replacing it with an intense musical virtuosity. Since the music is considered extreme, smaller record labels such as Roadrunner, Nuclear Blast and Metal Blade began to broadcast this new sound, much like the DIY labels that emerged with the American hardcore movement.

As previously noted, however, the sound of death metal is different from punk rock or hardcore. Although both styles possess certain rebellious elements, death metal is particularly distinctive. The musical core of death metal, which lends it ideological expression, is centered

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[14] Steven Blush, *American Hardcore*, (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2010),
[15] Steve Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2009).

on ample bass. For example, the overwhelming double kick drum repeatedly peppered throughout the music recreates the sound of machine gun fire and is symbolic of sounds of war. Death metal continued to use the fast tempos pioneered by American hardcore, but instead added an element of drumming technicality. *Modern Drummer* suggests that death metal drummers must be both extremely skillful and athletically prepared to play the music. Gene Hoglan of the band Death claims he practices with ankle weights so when he performs live, he can keep up with the fast double bass tempos throughout the long playlist.[16] Pete Sandoval reaffirmed this position by illuminating the importance of bodily health and fitness in an effort to create the desired fast tempo death metal drummers seek:

> My drumming was powerful, fast and tight, because I took care of myself. I took the right vitamins, and I took stuff that was for energy, like ginseng and honey. I really try to do things that increase my energy level. Especially with our new songs—they're very difficult, and I can't cheat it.[17]

Electric guitar playing likewise contributed to the musical virtuosity of death metal. Robert Walser, author of *Running With the Devil*, argues that metal guitar players are influenced by both American blues and classical approaches to music. Iconic composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Wagner and Vivaldi greatly influenced the virtuosic sound heavy metal guitarists wanted to recreate:

> Their appropriations and adaptation of classical models sparked the development of a new kind of guitar virtuosity, changes in the harmonic and melodic language of heavy metal, and new modes of musical pedagogy.[18]

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[16] Matt Peiken, "Death Metal Drummers: There May be Warning Stickers Slapped on Most Death Metal Albums These Days, but the Ungodly Drumming Inside is What's Truly Dangerous to Your Emotional and Physical Heath," *Modern Drummer*, Vol 19, issue 6, 1995.
[17] Matt Pelken, "Pete Sandoval of Morbid Angel", *Modern Drummer* ,vol22, issue 10, 1998.
[18] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Musical Madness in Heavy Metal Music,* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 58.

According to Walser, the purpose of writing *Running With the Devil* was "to contribute to demystifying classical music's aura of transcendent autonomy and to debunking stereotypical notions of heavy metal's musical crudity."[19] In other words, technical expertise is not limited to classical music as evident by expert metal guitarists Richie Blackmore and Randy Rhoads. Many musical observers continue to regard heavy metal as primitive because it possesses certain chaotic and aggressive tendencies. Walser debunks this notion, however, by arguing against mainstream musical scholarship.

As a result, heavy metal musicians, schooled in classical theory, invented a style of music that appealed to insurrectional youth culture while overtly distancing their music from a high-brow and prestigious coterie. According to musical scholars such as Walser, heavy metal is characterized by obvious technical achievements. The culture and attitude, however, substantially deviates from typical classical tastes. This formula of technicality and attitude is espoused by death metal musicians.

The vocal component in death metal music is the only element that lacks musical virtuosity. This serves to solidify the music's position outside the periphery of popular and acceptable notions of music. Absent the grunting and screaming vocals, there is a chance that death metal's musical virtuosity would gain greater appreciation within popular culture. Death metal's deafening vocal proliferations are symbolic, however, of defiance and rebelliousness against traditional notions of music. This element is greatly needed and celebrated within the death metal subculture because they create a desired effect of shock value.

When put together, these musical components create a musical avant-garde. Death metal is a musical genre that profoundly deviates from popular music. The vocal component almost mocks quintessential notions of harmony while the instrumental background pushes musical

[19] Walser, XV.

technicality to the extreme, thereby re-solidifying death metal's place outside the boundary of popular culture.

Death Metal Style: Masculinity, Violence, and Satanism

The style of any subculture is filled with significance, lending it a unique identity. Dick Hebdige provides an excellent definition of style in his work *Subculture:*

> Style in subculture is, then pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalization'. As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myths of consensus.[20]

Hebdige uses the subculture of punk rock to demonstrate this conviction. Punk rockers, he claims, inverted the traditional meanings behind mundane objects and images, which thereby provided them with a distinctive style that opposed dominant values. The safety pin, for example, normally used to bind materials together, was used instead to pierce ears and other body parts. Additionally, punk rockers liberated themselves from social norms by spiking and dying their hair. Although thought to be improper and unacceptable, it provided this subculture with a recipe for uniqueness. Additionally, it supplied them with a style that traveled against the mainstream, a way of rebelling from conventionality. Thus, these items and others were deconstructed from their ordinary meaning. They instead, became objects of fashion that were considered crass and unorthodox by popular culture.

How does death metal, then, "interrupt the process of 'normalization?" The subculture of death metal frequently celebrates anti-Christian values and sometimes even Satanic ones in order to combat Christian hegemony. Although not all members of the death metal subculture espouse Satanism, most would celebrate violence, war, gore and horror in an attempt to subvert tradition-

[20]Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 1979), 18.

ally accepted Christian ethos. In fact, scenes from horror films were some of the most influential elements contributing to death metal style as described by Morbid Angel guitarist Richard Brunelle:

> At the time we were all young—I was only 19—and me and Trey were heavily into reading the occult and gore movies, and just doing everything on the dark side and trying to shock people. It was pretty crazy. We used to stir up some attention. We used to go out of our way just to shock people. It was more than just music. Music was a big part of it, but it was a whole lifestyle.[21]

In order to put this into proper context, a brief description of hegemony is useful. The term hegemony in this instance is defined as certain ruling institutions that can exercise authority over subservient groups by winning over collective acceptance.[22] Dominant ideology, then, is a form of collective practice that forces subcultural groups to the social periphery. In this instance, since Christianity is widely accepted among various cultures, groups, and classes (overwhelmingly so in the South), it thereby cements its dominance over other theologies and beliefs. In doing so, it fits the label of hegemony. The behavior portrayed by the members of Morbid Angel and other metal groups, can be seen as an attempt to disrupt the flow of hegemonic values. It becomes obvious that these musicians were surrounded by these values during adolescence, and they came to view them as a threat to individual autonomy.

The bands Deicide and Cannibal Corpse provide another good example of "challenges to the principles of unity and cohesion."[23] Deicide (meaning "kill God") actively expresses anti-Christian and Satanist messages. Songs like "Repent to Die," "Behead the Prophet," and "Holy Deception," clearly demonstrate their anti-Christian stance as well as an attempt to disrupt Chris-

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[21] Albert Mudrian, *Choosing Death: The Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore*, (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2004), 81.
[22] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson & Brian Roberts, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (Hutchinson & Co 1976), 40.
[23] Hebdige, 18.

tian dominance. The song "Kill the Christian," not only accurately portrays Deicide's hatred directed at Christianity, but additionally it demonstrates a possible prejudice toward practicing Christian worshipers:

> Armies of darkness unite, Destroy their temples and churches with fire,
> Where in his world will you hide, Sentenced to death, the anointment of Christ,
> In due time your path leads to me, Put you out of your misery,
> The death of prediction, Kill the Christian, Kill the Christian...dead. [24]

Deicide's lead singer, Glen Benton, went as far as to burn an inverted crucifix into his forehead, thereby cementing his lifelong abhorrence for Christian supremacy. This provocative spectacle demonstrates how Satanism is associated within death metal style.

Cannibal Corpse, however, espouses the more violent and pornographic components of death metal subculture. Their lyrics and song titles refrain from blatant Satanic rhetoric, instead drawing inspiration from epic horror movies and novels and focusing on elements of torture and gruesome death. Songs like "Hammer Smashed Face," "Living Dissection," and "Butchered at Birth" all demonstrate their fascination with gore and repulsion. The song, "Meat Hook Sodomy" portrays a possible fascination with psychopathic killers common in many horror films:

> Splitting bodies, spilling guts on the ground,
> Sodomizing living beings with my utensils,
> Stabbing on your life stripped of all your skin,
> Disgusting to the world, Beauty to my eyes,
> The body lying naked, discharging my infection,
> Invigorating while I kill, intoxicating,
> Invoking suffering on human beings.[25]

Both Satanic and gore-infused musical elements helped create an image and style that death metal enthusiasts call "brutal." Obviously the components of brutality are not widely celebrated within popular culture. The fact that brutal images are commonplace in death metal al-

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[24] Deicide, *Once Upon The Cross,* Roadrunner, 1995.
[25] Cannibal Corpse, *Butchered at Birth,* Metal Blade Records, 1991.

lows us to view the ways in which style disrupts the conditions and practices of the social majority in terms of music and culture.

Another important element of style within death metal subculture is masculinity. From the early days of heavy metal in the 1970s, to contemporary metal, masculine behavior has always been evident. Heavy metal musicians had a propensity for exhibiting their muscles on stage, accompanied by macabre stage décor and violent musical lyrics. As described by Robert Walser, "it is not surprising to find that an important concern of metal is to represent male power and female subordination. Music, lyrics, visual images and behavior serve to construct gender identities."[26] One needs only to view a Mötley Crüe or Whitesnake video to see the blatant objectification of women.[27] It was not uncommon to observe women in music videos voluntarily submitting themselves to the will of male band members. Women are commonly displayed half-naked, sometimes stripping for the men and thereby offering themselves to irresistible male sexuality. Death metal subculture continued this trend of masculinity set by its heavy metal forebears; however as we will see, it embraced a very unique style aimed at celebrating mankind's primitive instinct.

Before we investigate this element of death metal style, a description of gender is important. Joan Scott provides an excellent definition of gender in *Gender and the Politics of History*. Her two fundamental propositions are that: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[28] These "perceived differences" are made apparent based on cul-

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[26] Walser, XVI.
[27] Mötley Crüe, "Girls, Girls, Girls," Produced by Tom Werman, Electra, 1987.
This video provides an excellent example of the objectification of women within the heavy metal milieu.
[28] Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History,* (New York: Columbia University Press 1999), 42.

tural symbols that invoke various meanings and "normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols."[29]

By applying Scott's definition of gender to the dynamics of heavy metal, we can analyze how these perceived differences help define death metal masculinity. Since gender is based on "perceived differences" and how they socially interact between the two sexes, then we can conclude gender is socially, as opposed to biologically conditioned. With this in mind, the role of the male in society is not an innate function but a function constructed by social and religious values—a hegemonic faith that defines male social behaviors. By rejecting the Christian notion of a civilized man and by embracing primal masculine attributes we are able to construct a viable identity of death metal masculinity.

Gail Bederman likewise provides a helpful analysis of gender. In her work *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917,* Bederman constructs a working definition of the difference between masculinity and manliness. "Masculinity" is the defining attributes of a man's primal instinct. It is his rugged, brutish behavior that distinguishes him over his female counterpart. "Manliness," however, is the character of masculine attributes combined with Protestant Victorian chivalry.[30] According to Victorian ethic, a man was bound in etiquette, self-restraint and control. A civilized man could control his barbaric urges in public. An uncivilized man, however, could not refrain from an overt public display of masculinity. He did not possess the appropriate "innate" functions to that of the civilized man and was therefore marginalized within the social hierarchy.

With this method outlined, we can view how death metal style is linked to masculine behavior. The most obvious portrayal of death metal masculinity is the blatant celebration of vio-

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[29] Scott, 43.
[30] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 172.

lence. Obituary's "Find the Arise" provides us with a perfect example with the infatuation of death and violence within the music:

> Go find the arise, Kill at first sight,
> Fight, live through the hell, War is our prize,
> Twisting their minds, Kill at first sight,
> Go find the arise, Kill at first sight.[31]

In the model provided by Bederman, society requires man to possess civilized traits and control his primal instincts. Death metal enthusiasts celebrate these uncontrolled primitive characteristics in an attempt to disrupt collective notions of civilized man. Violence and war have traditionally been male endeavors, and to celebrate such characteristics, illustrates a subcultural rejection from "civilized" progress. The concept of "civilized" is dictated by dominant values, thereby provoking a response from the death metal subculture in an attempt to subvert common notions of manliness. In a sense, the adoption of primal and barbaric behaviors is a statement against social male progression. Collective man is supposed to be caring, affectionate and civilized. According to individuals within the death metal milieu, these characteristics eliminate mankind's natural barbarity and obstruct his freedom to behave instinctively.

The vocal component of death metal music provides another excellent example of masculinity. The provocative guttural sound, sometimes referred to as Cookie Monster singing (the character from Sesame Street with a deep voice), is a technique that few women have the biological capability to master. Generally, men are given the natural ability to sing and speak in a deeper tone. This capability is celebrated in death metal subculture. The vocal technique is a deep "demonic and beastly" sound that is indicative of the sounds of chaos, death and misery. This beastly sound is used to intimidate outsiders and terrorize the notion of manliness.

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[31] Obituary, *Cause of Death*, Roadrunner, 1990.

When reviewing masculinity in music, one can observe sexist behavior as far back as the beginnings of rock 'n' roll. Sue Wise highlights in her article "Sexing Elvis," that the King of Rock was an iconic symbol of masculinity. Women were frequently sexually motivated by Elvis's overwhelming masculine features. It was even rumored that Elvis "enlarged" a certain male body part by strategically placing a metal rod in his pants. Wise then argues that his substantial genital area was symbolic of militant weaponry. This connection, Wise demonstrates, was celebrated by the highly male-dominated media. "When these male writers saw him on stage they saw a 'weapon' of 'heroic' proportions," highlights Wise.[32] This weapon was used to conquer "vulnerable" women who were unable to release themselves from the grasp of Elvis's devastatingly masculine attributes.

Furthermore, the electric guitar is sometimes linked to "phallic" symbols within rock music. The way the player gyrates and thrusts the guitar raises him to a level of superiority and dominance over the audience. One might remember the controversy surrounding Prince's Super Bowl halftime show in 2007. The "wardrobe malfunction," in this instance, was a thirty-three second long silhouette of Prince touting his guitar. Some audience members felt this display possessed phallic connotations.[33] This display had sexual implications directed toward the female audience members, while creating a feeling of envy among male audience members. Being on stage allows Prince a position of authority over his audience. The performance provided him with an opportunity to display his musical talents, sexual overtones and other abilities. In a

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[32] Sue Wise, "Sexing Elvis" in *On the Record* edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, (London: Routledge, 1990), 397.

[33]Associate Press. "Some See Phallic Imagery in Princes Show," *Today.com*, Feb. 23, 2007, http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/17013425/ns/today-entertainment/t/some-see-phallic-imagery-princes-show/ (accessed March, 4, 2012). A Wardrobe Malfunction is a colloquial term referring to an onstage performance mishap involving ones clothes. Usually the mishap implies sexual connotations.

sense, it allows him to entertain the audience. It appears his sexual pervasiveness is what female audience members demanded and what male audience members wanted to emulate.

If the guitar is indeed symbolic of a phallus, than how does this notion relate to death metal? It is not uncommon to see death metal musicians playing guitars shaped like weapons. The sharp and jagged edges on certain custom produced guitars are used to recreate images of battle axes. In fact, guitars are commonly referred as axes among the musical coterie. Some manufactures even replace the guitar's head stock with devil horns creating a "beastly and demonic" appearance. Thus, the phallic guitar becomes a deadly weapon used to triumph over weakness. The guitar player is displaying virtuosic skill with his weapon. Much like a warrior heading into battle, a savvy weapons expert can intimidate and conquer vulnerability. In the case of death metal, women are not helpless against overwhelming sexuality (as associated with Elvis), but rather are seen as helpless against the guitar's militancy and the brutality of its controller. In fact, blatant misogynistic song titles and lyrical content directly demonstrate this conviction. Cannibal Corpse, for example, has been a band plagued with controversy over the years, not just for graphic material, but for sado-masochist lyrical content. Songs depicting mutilated women by overpowering men have raised questions about the band's misogynistic tendencies. The song "Entrails Ripped From a Virgin's Cunt" provides a perfect example:

> Tied to my mattress, Legs spread wide
> Ruptured bowel, yanked from her insides,
> De-virginized with my knife.[34]

The final feature of death metal masculinity is apparent within the live gig and the resulting spectacle. In virtually all cultures, dance is a way for audiences to demonstrate appreciation. Rhythmic body movements (or the lack thereof) are forms of expression. Dance is sometimes

[34] Cannibal Corpse, *Tomb of the Mutilated*, Metal Blade Records, 1992.

considered nonverbal communication. Some dance techniques are sexual while others are ritualistic. Simon Frith provides a good analysis of dance and youth culture:

> The dance floor is the most public setting for music as sexual expression and has been an important arena of youth culture since the dance crazes of the beginning of the century when Afro-American rhythms began to structure white middle-class leisure, to set new norms for physical display, contact and movement. Dance has been, ever since, central to the meaning of popular music.[35]

With the emergence of punk in the late 1970s, dance fundamentally changed as a form of musical appreciation. The live performance took on distinct qualities that dramatically differed from conventional musical shows.

Sarah Thornton highlights this dramatic change of the live gig as a response to high quality record mass production. Advanced recording technology and the rapid distribution of records permitted youths to listen to music at their own leisure. Radio stations, night clubs and other social settings permitted DJ's to play the musical favorites from various artists. These records were more accessible than live bands, which had difficulty recreating the engineered quality of a record. As a result "performance had to find its essence, its superior values, and its *raison d'être.*"[36]

Every musical genre eventually finds its spirit during live performance. It is the expression of dance, however, that blends most of these distinct genres together. During the twentieth century, popular music and dance merged sexual behavior and drug experimentation as a form of musical appreciation both on and off stage during musical performance. Although the drug of choice and sexual expression differ among various genres, these are the basic components of dance and celebration during live performance. Despite this conformity, however, all genres and

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[35] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll,* (New York: *Pantheon Books, 1981), 244.*

[36] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 77.

generations of music were forced to show some sort of gratitude after musical culture was forced to contend with recorded music and the live DJ.

As previously discussed, many elements of punk rock possessed certain subversive intentions when the scene first erupted. Live performances were certainly no exception. The live gig possessed unprecedented levels of enthusiasm and energy. Audience members started to participate during live shows, creating a chaotic spectacle. Dance was no longer a display of sex appeal and drug influence, but rather an act of aggression. Punks engaged in violent rituals of "moshing" and "slam dancing" to demonstrate their appreciation. As a result, women were forced to the periphery of live participation, leaving men to celebrate violence and barbarity.

Death metal subculture continued this trend, adding more distinct elements of "stage diving," "circle-pit moshing" and "head banging" to the live show. Stage-diving and circle-pit moshing are variations of punk rock celebration. Head banging in death metal, however, is the activity of swinging your excessively long hair in various directions to the beat of the music. The hair, in this instance, is so long and unkempt, that it recreates a "Cousin Itt" appearance (the monstrous character from the Addams Family) because it covers every inch of their face and most of their torso.

Violent lyrical and musical content caused many members to participate in these activities, sometimes with little regard for their fellow man. This fierce audience participation certainly continues the masculine theme portrayed in other areas of death metal subculture. Engaging in acts of mild violence during the live gig seems only natural when the lyrical and musical content is synonymous with such activities.

This resurgent element of masculinity apparent within death metal certainly deviates from dominant culture in contemporary history. Former socially constructed gender roles of pa-

triarchy and masculine dominance began to deteriorate with the emergence of Second and Third Wave Feminism. Men and women of all ethnicities, nationalities and sexual preferences were starting to take on more equal functions, permitting joint social roles that eradicated or at least limited gender dominance. These social and political changes could provide the evidence needed to explain the emergence of death metal and its celebration of barbaric behavior. Meanwhile, the rise of "Riot Grrrl" music (the escalating role of women in vociferous and aggressive rock) may have led some men to push musical and cultural masculinity to the extreme in an attempt to counterbalance the new visibility of women in aggressive sounding rock music.

The Cultural Response to Death Metal

When avant-garde subcultures gain enough cultural support they begin to challenge the dominant ethos and the collective way of life. As a response, dominant cultures are forced to take action against insurrectional behavior. This reaction is what the authors of *Resistance Through Rituals* call a "moral panic." They define a moral panic as "a spiral in which the social groups who perceive their world and position as threatened, identify a 'responsible enemy', and emerge as the vociferous guardians of traditional values."[37] As previously discussed, death metal subculture challenged many traditional values such as those found in religion, masculinity and nonviolence. After these antithetical notions gained subcultural acceptance, members within popular culture felt compelled to respond in an effort to protect established values.

The authors of *Resistance Through Rituals* define three thresholds of social tolerance. First they discuss a "permissive threshold," where subcultures threaten and challenge collective social rule. The second is a "legal threshold," where subculture groups "undermine social legit-

[37] Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, ed. *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in post-war Britain.* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1976), 72.

imacy" and the third is an "extreme violent threshold," where acts of domestic terrorism and crime actually take place.[38] As with most subcultures, death metal only challenges the first two thresholds. Although lyrical messages portrayed characteristics of extreme violence, it appears most band members and death metal enthusiasts neglect real acts of domestic terror.[39] As a result, popular culture fought the industry by acts of regulation and censorship to preserve social youth from controversial material.

Before we continue to analyze death metal, a brief description of the Parents' Music Recourse Center (PMRC) is needed to successfully demonstrate the dominant culture's response to controversial heavy metal as well as other styles of music. As previously mentioned, the early phases of heavy metal expressed and celebrated controversial traits such as Satanism, violence and the occult. As a result, this brought harsh criticism from various forms of social leadership such as the PMRC. The organization, founded in 1985, was led by Tipper Gore and other wives of various Washington political elites. The committee's objective was to intimidate record companies into labeling their products with warning stickers. The stickers provided parents and potential listeners with a caveat that labeled the record as vulgar and not suitable for children. Additionally, the PMRC requested that certain broadcasters refrain from playing music from questionable artists and asked that lyric sheets be made available to the customer before point of purchase. As a result of this campaign, some companies agreed to some of the requests and put the "parental warning" labels on records considered controversial.

But was the action of the PMRC considered censorship? Deena Weinstein, author of *Heavy Metal*, certainly feels the actions of the PMRC demonstrate censorship, despite the lack of legal action against recording companies. She argues that the committee members knew that

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[38] Hall and Jefferson, 79.
[39] I have not found any evidence of Florida Death Metal musicians engaging in acts of terror.

controversial material is considered free expression and is therefore protected. As a result, another approach was needed to combat threatening lyrical content:

> They (PMRC) hope that a labeling policy will cut off heavy metal at the point of distribution. Their idea is that chain stores will not stock labeled records if they face pressure and loss of patronage from the members of conservative groups and their sympathizers, and from concerned parents. Labeling, then, is a form of censorship through economic pressure, tilting the balance between heavy metal and its despisers in favor of the latter.[40]

As we can see, dominant leadership exercised their social power to preserve society's established values. These leaders use their popularity and media advantage to speak out against "provocative" material. Thus, they inevitably created a social "moral panic" with the objective of regulating consumerism by applying economic pressure on an industry they radically opposed.

John Tardy (lead singer of Obituary) said "anytime you have a band that might have a view slanted to one side or the other, be it political or religious, you have to expect some sort of negative attention."[41] Tardy's response successfully addresses popular culture's reaction to death metal. Although Obituary was never an overtly political band, their lyrical content, as well as other death metal artists, provoked a response from various social leaders worldwide.

Cannibal Corpse and Deicide are two examples of bands that have experienced censorship abroad. The governments of Australia, Germany and Korea have all banned certain Cannibal Corpse albums. Additionally these governments were successful in eliminating certain songs from the Cannibal Corpse playlist during live performances.[42] A school teacher in Germany actually managed to get the first three albums banned throughout the country for ten years. The band was even forced to sign legal documents agreeing to the ban which subjected them to pros-

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[40] Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, (Da Capo Press, 200), 266.
[41] John Tardy, interviewed by author, August 9, 2011.
[42] Sam Dunn. *Metal: A Headbangers Journey.* Snelville Pictures, Warner Home Video, 2005.

ecution and penalties if there was a breach of contract.[43] Additionally, Deicide was subjected to international censorship. The mayor of Valparaiso, Chile discovered the band's controversial promotional posters dispersed throughout the city and led a successful campaign to disrupt their live performances.[44]

To censor or regulate an artist in the United States, however, is a bit more challenging. Social leaders are forced to comply with First Amendment protections that limit their chances of successfully eradicating provocative material. Awareness campaigns are the only effective means to highlight controversial aspects of heavy metal. In the United States, the campaign against heavy metal was a bipartisan crusade.

As Weinstein astutely acknowledges, "heavy metal is one of the few socio-cultural phenomena in the United States that evokes the same response from those normally bitter opponents, the politically correct progressive critics and the religious and populist right wing."[45] Right wing conservatives such as Bob Dole and members of the 700 Club (a Christian coalition and talk show) have broadcasted their distaste for death metal, labeling the music as a "corruptor of youth."[46] Longtime civil rights activist C. Delores Tucker and conservative William Bennett together led a campaign against record companies pushing them to drop provocative artists from their labels. The campaign brought support from other political leaders such as Sen. Joe Liberman and Sen. Sam Nunn (both Democrats at the time) in an effort to bring cultural awareness of the content of some records.[47] The idea was to create enough social recognition in order to economically pressure record companies to drop offensive artists and win the cultural war.

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[43] Grant Britt, "On the Offensive: Cannibal Corpse Stays Alive Despite Controversy," *Creative Loafing Charlotte*, October 3, 2007. http://clclt.com/charlotte/on-theoffensive/Content?oid=2146747 (accessed August 15, 2011).
[44] Dan Hammer, "Deicide Banned in Chile," *MetalHammer.com,* posted Feb. 23, 2006. http://www.metalhammer.co.uk/news/deicide-banned-in-chile/ (accessed August 15, 2011).
[45] Weinstein, 237.
[46] Britt.
[47] D.j. Salem-fitzgerald and Chuck Philips, Rap foes put 20 artists on a hit list, Los Angeles Times, May 31, 1996.

Additionally, many activist groups contributed to the "moral panic" uproar. During an interview at his home, lead singer Glen Benton shot and killed a squirrel, claiming it was chewing on house wires, and thus incurred a storm of protests and death threats from animal rights activists.[48] It is even rumored that the radical animal rights activist group "Animal Militia" set off a bomb during a Deicide live performance in Stockholm, Sweden in protest of Benton's actions and lyrics about animal cruelty.[49]

Any kind of protest against "filthy" material, however, is more symbolic than effective. Although restrictions on media have plagued certain record companies (large chain stores such as Wal-Mart refuse to carry explicit music), the public attention given to death metal artists usually only serves to attract more disaffected youth to the genre. Cannibal Corpse, for example, appeared in the popular motion picture *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (a PG-13 movie starring Jim Carrey) suggesting the inefficacy of awareness campaigns. Morbid Angel even briefly enjoyed some market success when their album *Covenant* was released by Giant Records (a smaller company under Warner) and actually witnessed a couple of their songs played on MTV's *Headbanger's Ball*.[50] Despite popular culture's effort to contain death metal, the awareness campaigns did not eradicate the music and actually helped the style gain some mild economic success.

According to John Tardy, death metal is "the most extreme kind of music."[51] It is the most extreme in terms of sound, image and lyrical content. Although many of the original artists are still active, they must now negotiate certain physical limitations brought on by older age, to successfully endure the hardships of playing extreme music. Shortly after the emergence of

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[48] Ben Buckner, "Q & A With Decides, Glen Benton," *Decibel Magazine.com*, July 19, 2000. http://www.decibelmagazine.com/magazine/amon-amarth-78-%E2%80%93-april-2011/q-a-with-deicides-glen-benton/ (accessed August 15, 2011).
[49] Michael Moynihan and Didrik Soderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground. (*Port Townsend: Feral House, 2005), 307.
[50] Purcell, 66.
[51] John Tardy, interviewed by author, August 8, 2011.

death metal, a new subculture emerged and attracted a larger social response. As we will see in the next chapter, the black metal subculture extends the controversy beyond the activities of death metal. This cultural phenomenon pushed the limits of the second threshold (when using the model provided by Clark, Hall, Roberts and Jefferson) of "undermining social legitimacy" and contributed to acts of domestic terror and violence. Additionally, issues of nationalism and race brought Norwegian black metal under the global spotlight.

Modern Florida and the Perfect Storm for Death Metal

In order to successfully analyze Florida death metal, we must juxtapose modern Florida with the modern South. Although contemporary history has experienced the birth of numerous heavy metal scenes all over the continental U.S. and Europe, the conditions of modern Florida produced the most radical, unique, and controversial death metal culture. An analysis of the Antebellum southern United States is absolutely pivotal in an attempt to explain this rebellious musical culture. As we will see, Southern music, over the course of the twentieth century, maintained strong musical traditions. These customs, however, break with the emergence of Southern rock and later aggressive music.

A region stricken with poverty, the South turned to religious ideals to cope with the hardships of southern life. Blues, bluegrass, and country frequently all pay tribute to Christianity and the idea of salvation. The South gave birth to established musicians such as Ricky Skaggs and Ralph Stanley who reached international fame with their combination of Southern folk and Christian expression. With the emergence of Southern rock in later decades, however, the South witnessed a musical genre that demonstrated "a constant struggle between Sin and Salvation."[52]

[52]Mike Butler, "Lord, Have Mercy On My Soul: Sin, Salvation, and Southern Rock." *Southern Cultures* 9 (Winter, 2003): 73-87.

According to scholar Michael Butler, Southern music (particularly Southern rock) was caught in the middle of rebellion and Christian ethic. Southern rock musicians viewed this polemic as a struggle between good versus evil or as Butler appropriately call "a preoccupation with damnation and salvation."[53]

With the ascendancy of rock 'n' roll and later the counterculture movement, youth culture felt liberated from many conventional pressures. A drug-experimenting and pacifist musical coalition erupted that challenged the collective establishment. Southern rock embraced some of these rebellious characteristics. Social activism and drug experimentation merged with traditional Southern typecasts that glorified "stereotypical male values such as fighting, gambling, and sexual conquests."[54] In a sense, Southern Rock embraced certain lifestyles of modernized rock but could not refrain from adding an element of Southern Nationalism. Additionally, some of the hedonistic behaviors apparent in the movement forced Southern musicians to struggle with the notions of sin and salvation, inevitably compelling them to choose between a Southern identity or a national identity. Just as it appeared that Southern music could become more amenable to modern characteristics and social behaviors, it was pulled back into the maelstrom of conservative Southern ideology and Southern pride. The reason for this behavior can be explained quite easily when analyzing Southern rock in the context of a changing twentieth century.

The South has always been a region defined in relation to the North. It was a region that was second tier to their industrial neighbor. After the Civil War, the South was left in a state of dependency. Wealthy Northern industrialists and capitalists headed south during Reconstruction to exploit unorganized and cheap Southern labor. Any profits generated during these ventures,

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[53] Butler, 73.
[54] Butler, 73.

generally benefited the developed North. As a result, the South was left poor, fragmented and subservient to Northern capitalists and Southern elites.[55]

As the mid-twentieth century approached, however, things would forever change in the South. In order to keep pace with the rest of the nation, the South industrialized and formed a very business-friendly environment. Additionally, the federal government finally struck a fatal blow to the racialized Southern worldview when it forcefully ended segregation and passed Civil Rights legislation. As a result, the South lost much of its autonomy and integrated with the rest of the country. This, in turn, led many Northern and Midwestern Americans to the South to take advantage of a booming economy and an industry welcoming atmosphere.

Concurrently, born-and-raised Southerners were caught between the days of the Old South and modernization. Local communities still practiced the Southern way of life while the social landscape evolved. This point in Southern history helps explain the behaviors of Southern rock musicians. These artists, and the culture that followed, were caught between opposing worlds. The modern South brought a new demographic, facilitated industry and assisted certain popular cultures such as rock 'n' roll. Native Southerners evolved and welcomed some of this change, however, it appears they struggled to cope with an emerging secular and sinful popular culture. This behavior is evident in the lyrics and behavior of Southern musicians. They celebrated some of the rebellious attitudes of the counterculture and even attempted to Southernized them, but at the same time, they were filled with guilt and were pulled back into the ideals of the Old South.

It is important to place Florida within this analysis of the modern South. Economist Stanley K. Smith of the University of Florida stated that "rapid population growth has had a tremendous impact on virtually all aspects of life in Florida, and no public issue can be fully understood

[55] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913,* (Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

without a firm grasp of the state's population dynamics."[56] According to Smith, Florida grew to the fourth largest state in the United States in 1995 after being one of the smallest states east of the Mississippi in the beginning of the twentieth century.[57] Similar to other Southern states, Florida experienced rapid industrialization which attracted migrants seeking employment opportunities. What sets Florida apart, however, is the growth in tourism. Travelers from all over the country witnessed Florida's warm winters and pristine beaches that eventually led to a dense retiree population from the Northeast.

Florida additionally witnessed the birth of an enormous Hispanic population during the 1980s. According to sociologist Lisandro Perez, Florida's Hispanic population increased by eighty percent between the years of 1980-1990.[58] Composed of primarily Cuban migrants, Florida's changing racial composition certainly sets it apart from other growing Southern states during the stages of the late twentieth century.

These statistics indicate that Florida modernized at a faster pace than other growing Southern states. The state experienced rapid northern and Cuban migration that forever changed the state's political and cultural dynamics. These changes link modern Florida closer to the remaining nation at large than it does to its neighboring Southern states.

Now that we have finally demonstrated the process of Southern modernization in Florida, we can now analyze the emergence of Florida death metal in its proper context. As previously mentioned, the rise of aggressive music broke certain trends in Southern musical composition. Bands such as Corrosion of Conformity, Millions of Dead Cops and the Butthole Surfers initiat-

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[56] Stanley Smith, "Population Growth and the Demographic Change in Florida," in *Amid Political, Cultural and Civic Diversity: Building a Sense of Community in Florida,* edited by Lance deHAven-Smith and David Colburn. (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1998), 25.
[57] Smith, 29.
[58] Lisandro Perez, "Florida's Hispanics and the State's political process," in *Amid Political, Cultural and Civic Diversity: Building a Sense of Community in Florida*, edited by Lance deHAven-Smith and David Colburn. (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1998), 93-94.

ed this break during the early 1980s. The sounds of aggressive punk challenged traditional Southern music in both sound and mentality. At this point, Southern music no longer needed to represent a conflict between sin and salvation. Death metal compounded this new musical mentality. No longer remorseful for sinful behavior, the death metal subculture directly challenged the Christian establishment in the South as well as the nation at large. This inevitably led to the controversy surrounding death metal.

The issue of misogyny, however, certainly raises some questions regarding Florida death metal. If the artists were indeed rebelling against Southern Christian dominance, then they should have rebelled against the patriarchal social structure espoused by Southern Christian culture. Instead they celebrated male dominance over women and rejected feminism. Taking this under consideration, why would Florida produce a subculture that denigrated female liberation, considering the fact that the state was more socially progressive compared to the remaining South?

Was Florida death metal stuck between this polarization? Up to this point, I have argued that Florida death metal was a cultural avant-garde that represented a modern contrast with traditional Southern music. I have additionally argued that this movement was the first of its kind, a subculture that did not piggyback on more rebellious and modernized Northern subcultures. If this is the case, then why did Florida death metal reject gender equality and align itself more with the old Southern worldview? Perhaps they were influenced by certain parts of Northern Florida that retained some strong aspects of Southern culture. Or perhaps Florida briefly fell victim to what some scholars call a “Southernization of America,” in which the entire nation has become

overwhelmed with Southern ideals.[59] Despite these unanswered questions, it certainly appears death metal caused intense controversy in not just the South or the entire nation, but around the globe.

[59] James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black And White Southerners Transformed America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Although Gregory did not coin this phrase, his text provides an excellent example of how Southern Ideals shaped the entire nation.

3. HEAVY METAL HITS NORSE LAND: THE SUBCULTURE OF NORWEGIAN BLACK METAL

Until the early morning hours on June 6, 1992, the epic Fantoft Stave church stood tall outside Bergen, Norway. Suddenly the church caught ablaze, bringing light to the night sky and catching the eye of Norwegian authorities. Unable to contain the fire, policemen, firefighters, and the church community sadly watched the building being destroyed. Over the course of a single evening this historic landmark, originally built in 1150, was reduced to a pile of ashes. After originally thinking it was an accident, authorities soon began suspecting arson. Almost a month later, the Revheim Church in Stravanger, Norway caught fire and burned to the ground. Soon after, the Holmenkollen Chapel in Oslo ignited and collapsed. These events later set off a chain of incidents resulting in a total of twenty-four church arsons in Norway between the years of 1992-1994. But who caused these events and how were they to be contained? The media suspected juvenile delinquents, but could not find any hard evidence. After a leak to the press, Norway came to find that a group of young adults, devoted to a new style of music, committed these atrocious acts.

But what is black metal and why did members of this youth culture commit itself to the destruction of these priceless cultural landmarks? Was it some sort of statement or was it, as Kjetil Manheim from the band Mayhem said, "Adolescents attempting to gain acceptance within a particular clique?"[60] Even if these drastic actions were performed to gain some status within a certain youth group, what would compel young adults to take such radical measures to achieve approval?

What follows is an examination of this subculture; one that seeks to answer some of the presently debated questions in Norway and within the heavy metal milieu. This chapter argues

[60] *Once upon a time in Norway,* Grenzeløs Productions, Another World, 2008.

that black metal was a cultural avant-garde in both musical advancement and cultural disloyalty. By cultural disloyalty, I mean a subculture devoted to erasing certain elements cherished and adored by mainstream society. Additionally, "Avant-Garde," although difficult to define, will be used to describe something that travels against the current of collective culture. Black metal, I feel, truly captures these two descriptions

Black metal became a subversive subculture, combining the traditional heavy metal ethos of masculinity, religious dissent and espousal of violence. They additionally, however, added an element of Norwegian nationalism. Used as an insurrectional tactic against hegemonic culture in Norway, these distinctive elements became a battle cry for black metal enthusiasts.

This chapter will begin with a brief description of black metal's foundations, sounds, image and attire. Only after we explore its cultural origins are we able to theorize the movement and possibly gain a sense of cause for these drastic actions taken by black metal enthusiasts. This essay will then discuss the importance of religion within the movement, a topic that is salient not only within the black metal milieu, but with extreme heavy metal in general. A comparison of religion to other genres of metal will facilitate an understanding of the exact role theology plays inside black metal subculture. After religion is thoroughly explored, I will discuss at length the issue of nationalism within black metal. Nationalism is directly related to the subject of religion and will aid us in comprehending black metal identity. Finally, this paper will explore the issues of race and gender. A strong masculine persona combined with a Norse ethnic background helps us grapple with the cultural polemic of black metal.

To accomplish the above tasks, the bands Mayhem, Darkthrone, Gorgoroth, Emperor, and Burzum will be used as a case study. Although various other bands are useful to describe

this movement (and will be discussed heavily throughout this chapter) these five bands make up the original actors involved within this controversial and subversive subculture.

These issues are comprehensive and interdependent. One must first grasp an understanding of the relationship between religion and black metal before understanding nationalism and masculinity. Second, all of the issues are again related to what Dick Hebdige calls "style." Defined as something "pregnant with significance," style "transformations go against nature, interrupting the process of normalization."[61] I will again use Hebdige, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and various other authors from the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies as general guides for this chapter. Their methods will help to define hegemonic culture as well as explain the insurrectional actions taken by the black metal community.

What is Black Metal Music? The Sounds and Symbols of a Genre

What can easily be depicted as musical dissonance by supporters of popular music, black metal is a style of music that is sometimes described as an "unrelenting assault."[62] This "assault" can be pleasing to some people, but for most, black metal is considered unpleasant. Truly a style designed to challenge popular aesthetics, black metal can appropriately be labeled as an avant-garde musical subculture.

Borrowing sounds from their forefathers Venom, Bathory, Hellhamer and Celtic Frost, black metal artists emerged as a crass and unorthodox musical genre.[63] These early bands propagated darkish themes such as Satanism, the Occult and paganism, eventually earning the respect of young Black Metalists. Additionally, these bands produced a very coarse and unrefined sound later celebrated among the black metal coterie.

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[61] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 18.
[62] Ian Christe, *Sounds of the Beast,* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), 269.
[63] *Murder Music: A History of Black Metal,* Directed by David Kenny, Available at Rockworld TV, 2007.

Concurrently, American death metal made an appearance in the global metal arena shortly after the emergence of Venom and Bathory. It was the controversial lyrical message and forbidden album artwork that challenged collective society. Although these musical influences had a tremendous impact on black metal, the youth culture in Norway felt these musical styles were too commercialized and that they neglected any true message. According to Varg Vikernes from the band Burzum, "black metal was a revolt against the modern world and in particular against the commercialized (Americanized) death metal scene."[64]

In order to distance themselves from other forms of popular music, including heavy metal, the youth culture in Norway adopted a new sound and image that spoke exclusively to Norwegians. What really challenged conventional music at the time, especially early forms of heavy metal, was the poor production and sound quality black metal desired and possessed. Black metal combined many musical elements of death metal such as the overwhelmingly fast snare beat (called a Blast Beat) and the relentless pounding of the double kick drum, and yet chose to muffle the sound with poor recording production. Varg Vikernes from Burzum especially finds this element within black metal to be crucial. During the production of his self-titled album, he insisted they record with the oldest and worst microphone possible in an attempt to "rebel against good production."[65] Additionally, black metal neglected many of the virtuosic elements associated with death metal music. Instead, they wanted the music to resemble the darkest sounds possible, almost creating noise rather than music. Traditional music, in this context, would be something pleasing to the ear. It consisted of delightful harmonies, appropriate time signatures and complimenting chord progressions. The "noise" the black metal bands wanted to achieve was the antithesis of traditional music. It was something designed to offend the average pop music

[64] Burzum and Varg Vikernes, Hosted by Mother Russia Majordomo, Interview by Chris Mitchell, *Metal Crypt E-Zine*,http://www.burzum.org/eng/library/2005_interview_metalcrypt.shtml (accessed 12/05/2011).
[65] *Until the Light Takes Us*, directed by Aaron Aites & Ewell, (New York City: Variance Films, 2009) DVD.

listener. Freniz from the band Darkthrone believes the importance of this component within black metal is absolutely critical. He argues that bad production is crucial in order to correctly symbolize the "coldness" black metal aspires to recreate.[66] The music is intended to create an unsettling and "cold" feeling to audience members outside the black metal coterie. Poor production helps facilitate this distressing feeling.

Black metal, in its early incarnations, can almost be labeled as anti-appealing. The music itself is something significantly different from other musical genres including other forms of heavy metal. Many bands developed a high pitch scream to codify the vocals contrary to the deep belching vocals associated with the death metal genre. Many bands also implemented distorted synthesizers within their music to establish a daunting sound while incorporating disharmonic Norwegian chants as backup choruses. Truly intended to shock listeners, this Norwegian youth culture created a musical sound that profoundly deviated from popular music. In an effort to distance themselves from convention music, black metal gained its authentic aestheticism.

By using Satanic and evil rhetoric, the lyrical content, in its early foundation, propagated a strict allegiance to blasphemy. These crass and crude lyrical messages are emblematic of many black metal songs. Mayhem's "Carnage" provides us with an excellent example of this point:

> Winds of War, Winds of Hate
> Armageddon, tales from Hell
> The wage of mayhem, the wage of sin
> Come and hear, Lucifer sings.[67]

Not surprisingly, black metal artists also compose songs representative of their surrounding environment. Norway is a cold and dark land with harsh winters. It is also a country filled with epic landscapes, such as majestic mountains, rivers and oceans. Songs such as Emperor's

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[66] *Until the Light Takes US,* Aites & Ewell.
[67] Mayhem, *Live in Leipzig,* Obscure Plasma Records, 1993.

"Beyond the Great Vast Forest" and "The Burning Shadows of Silence" are evidence of the environmental quality black metal possesses. The song "The Majesty of the Night Sky" successfully captures the landscape in Norway:

> Like the tide, shadows flow towards the shore of light,
> The night comes whirling like a maelstrom.
> Warring waves of crackling clouds embrace this nightside landscape.
> The heavens bleed, through open wounds, the dim light of the Moon.
> The winds are crying mournfully and tears fly with the gusts.
> They whip my clenched faces freezing skin with ice-cold burning cuts. [68]

After exploring much of the lyrical content, it becomes clear that black metal is symbolic of the Norwegian environment. It is music produced to capture the essence of its surroundings. The dark, harsh and discordant sounds and lyrical messages is a reflection of the climate and landscape the youth culture developed around.

The cover art on black metal records also deeply differentiates them from most popular music, including "commercialized" death metal. Most American death metal artists imposed morbid and grotesque animated imagery on and within each record, but black metal experimented with photography. Darkthrone's albums such as *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* (see appendix 1.1) and *Transilvanian Hunger*, along with Mayhem's *Live in Leipzig* album, used a contrasted black and white color scheme to create a dark and cold feeling truly symbolic of the sound, landscape and image they were attempting to create.[69] The overuse of negative space and the lack of any color in the piece creates the focal point of a howling face exhibited on the *Transylvanian Hunger* album (see appendix 1.2). The facial expression and make-up used in the photograph lend it an inhuman, evil quality echoed by the inverted crosses and the candles which give off no light. The same technique is used in the photograph for the cover of "Live in Leipzig," but with

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[68] Emperor, *In the Nightside Eclipse*, Candlelight, 2004.
[69] Darkthrone, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, Peaceville, 1992 and *Transilvanian Hunge*, Peaceville, 1994. Mayhem, *Live in Leipzig*, Obscure Plasma Records, 1993.

a slightly more realistic effect (see appendix 1.3). Again, the face seems inhuman, but here the candles only serve to highlight those monstrous qualities. As the movement evolved, album artwork became more representative of their surrounding natural landscape by use of animation. Records would impose painted representations of scenic environments such as Emperor's *In the Nightside Eclipse* which portrays a painted landscape of epic mountains and dark forests inundated by mass amounts of snow (see appendix 1.4). The sky in the piece is tumultuous while the mountains expose their sharp and dangerous qualities. The forest is dark and threatening, allowing the piece to resemble the pristine Norwegian environment during the harsh winter. It is not uncommon to view black metal's visual art as an attempt to place the individual within his natural habitat—to reduce the individual back to his original and primitive state before Norwegian modernization. The land and the environment are truly important elements apparent within black metal and are used to create a unique identity that profoundly differentiates from other forms of popular music including heavy metal.

One of the most effective methods to describe black metal's distinctiveness is by discussing the provocative element visible during live shows. More suitably called a "live spectacle," black metal certainly transformed the notion of the live performance. Again, according to Sarah Thornton, author of *Club Cultures*, musicians throughout the twentieth century reinvented the live performance. Advanced recording technology and the rapid distribution of records permitted youths to listen to music at their own discretion. Since technology made it possible to listen to music at one's own leisure, musical subcultures were forced to recreate the meaning of a live gig. As a result, musicians began to express their emotions and art via live performance.[70]

[70] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 77.

Throughout rock 'n' roll history, musicians developed a provocative live show to accompany their musical performance. Alice Cooper and Iggy Pop were some of the original controversial live performers to modernize the live "gig." Their violent stage antics and sexual gestures caused many to question the artists' motives and in some instances led to censorship. Alice Cooper invoked certain theatrical elements during his performance such as provocative execution scenes and morbid stage exploits. Iggy Pop embraced live spontaneity rather than dramatic reenactments, resulting in self-mutilation and inappropriate sexual displays. Steve Waksman, author of *This Ain't the Summer of Love,* explains that the "two artists exemplified two distinct modes of performance. One is geared toward the production of a large-scale spectacle (Alice Cooper); the other is tailored to a more intimate space (Iggy Pop)."[71]

So how does black metal relate to the model described by Waksman? Also, how does it deviate from other live performances? Do the artists perform a theatric spectacle or do they put on shows geared toward intimacy and raw passion emblematic of artists such as Iggy Pop and various other punk-like icons? Although a variety of performance styles exist with the black metal movement, this genre encompasses both descriptions. Performances truly intended to challenge what some considered oppressive cultures; Gorgoroth and Mayhem cleverly combined both polarized reinventions of the live performance.

In Krakow, Poland 2004, in what certainly qualifies as a controversial live spectacle, Gorgoroth took the stage to perform in front of thousands of fans. Reacting to a highly publicized show, Gorgoroth decided to challenge the Polish establishment by taking their live act to the next level of absurdity. What took place was a macabre live performance. Impaled sheep heads, nude models pinned up against four Crucifixes covered in blood, and plenty of blasphe-

[71] Steve Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 72.

mous imagery covered the stage, arousing controversy.[72] In fact, a police investigation took place that contemplated prosecution for actions of animal cruelty and violation of Poland's anti-blasphemy laws.[73] Although no serious indictments took place, Polish authorities imposed hefty fines on the show organizers.

The band Mayhem provides another excellent example of the live spectacle. One of the original black metal groups, Mayhem additionally stirred controversy not only because of their onstage theatrics such as impaled pig-heads and plenty of blasphemous imagery, but because of their front man, Per Yngve Ohlin (aka "Dead"). A very disturbed and psychotic individual, Per Ohlin fundamentally altered the live spectacle, reaching a level seldom witnessed before.

Soon after the band's formation, Ohlin joined the band as the vocalist with the objective of transforming the meaning behind the live performance. Truly obsessed with death, Ohlin would apply face paint before all shows with the sole objective of recreating the image of a living corpse. Later given the name "Corpse Paint," future black metalists embraced this image distinguishing the genre from previous forms of metal. Additionally, Ohlin would bury his clothes in the ground for weeks upon end, and then proceed to wear them on stage after they started to deteriorate and rot in an effort to appear as a zombie-like figure. Perhaps even more disturbing, Ohlin supplemented this dark appearance with onstage self-mutilation. Known for severely cutting himself onstage, Ohlin would shock his audience by fusing the live spectacle with intimate participation with the audience. His blood from his onstage mutilation would find its way on the audience members that were brave enough to view the performance from the front row. If this were somehow not grotesque enough, he would inhale the stench of dead animals onstage contained in a plastic bag to supplement his extravagant performance and to facilitate his

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[72] Gorgoroth, *Black Mass in Krakow 2004*. Metal Mind Production, 2008.
[73]GORGOROTH: Controversial Krakow Concert To Be Released On DVD, News Archives www.roadrunnerrecords.com/blabbermouth.net 3/14/08 (accessed 11/05/2011).

growing character.[74] According to Kjetil Manheim, the band Mayhem wanted to find an expression that attacked the establishment. To foster this position, they used Satanism and other disturbing onstage theatrics to certainly push the level of musical and performing absurdity.[75]

Ohlin lived his short life truly devoted to his onstage character. In fact, the desired deathly and morbid image Ohlin aspired for eventually inundated his personality. Severely depressed, his dark personality became the bane of his existence. While in a friend's apartment on April 8, 1991, Ohlin took his own life after hours of self-mutilation. In an effort to continue the band's infamous image, his band mate Øystein Aarseth photographed Ohlin's mutilated body and proceeded to make it the album cover of *Dawn of the Black Hearts.*[76]

When reviewing black metal, the musicians' subversive intentions become obvious; the sound, the image, and lyrical content are all deviations from popular music. Popular music's lyrical message, sound, song structure and culture are certainly more accepted within the dominant milieu. Black metal emerges in opposition to what is considered tolerable. Their aim is to disrupt the conditions of acceptability by pushing the limits of the status quo and by creating an alternate reality. As described later in this essay, this musical alternative evolved into a militant subculture centered on eradicating what they deem as an oppressive ethos. As we will see, such artists later evolved into a group determined to make their music a reality.

Religion and Black Metal

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[74] Michael Moynihan and Didrik Soderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground,* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 1998, 2003), *54.*
[75] *Once upon a time in Norway,* Grenzeløs Productions, Another World, 2008.
[76] Mayhem, *Dawn of the Black Hearts,* Warmaster Records, 1995.

It has been said that without Christianity, heavy metal would cease to exist.[77] After reviewing metal's musical evolution and influences, I believe this notion to be accurate. It is apparent, from heavy metal's preliminary phase, that religion played an important role in everything from the musical composition to image, attire and stage presence. Credited as the Godfathers of heavy metal, Black Sabbath easily proves this conviction. Albums such as *Sabbath, Bloody, Sabbath, We Sold Our Soul for Rock N Roll,* and *Heaven and Hell* suggest the influence of Christianity. In fact, the name itself, "Black Sabbath" indicates a possible struggle against or rejection of Christian faith.

The religious influences of metal are additionally apparent through the musical composition and structured sound. Early metal bands such as Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden adopted the formerly forbidden musical interval known as the tritone. This musical interval, originally prohibited in medieval ecclesiastical singing and avoided in early modern European musical composition, is synonymous with summoning the devil.[78] The embracement of the tritone would help define the image of metal. The music began to venture into the forbidden in both musical composition and style.

So how does Christianity, or the rejection of Christianity, relate to black metal subculture? As previously mentioned, black metal propagated blasphemous rhetoric by preaching satanic messages. Additionally, images correlated with evil, Satan and darkness were plastered sporadically during live performance.[79] Reenactments of execution, and vast amounts of fake (and sometimes real) blood along with dead animals symbolized their abhorrence for Christianity. As the movement evolved, however, the messages became blasphemous for different reasons

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[77] Interview With Deena Weinstein in, *Metal: A Headbangers Journey*, directed by Sam Dunn, Snelville Pictures, Warner Home Video, 2005
[78] *Metal: A Headbangers Journey*, directed by Sam Dunn, Snelville Pictures, Warner Home Video, 2005.
[79] Gry Mork, "On old School black Metal." *In Contemporary Religions: Satanism*, edited by Jesper Aagaa Peterson, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009) 187.

altogether. Metal enthusiasts began to celebrate Paganism and used ancient Norse mythology to reject the dominant faith of Christianity. But the question becomes, why does black metal subculture reject this faith and how does their rejection compare to other metal subcultures?

The black metal movement evolved into something more than just controversial lyrical messages and album art celebrating violence, war, and horror. In an effort to distance themselves from previous metal genres that used blasphemy as a publicity stunt, black metal musicians and fans felt compelled to embrace the anti-Christian message beyond lyrics, album art and stage performance. Blasphemy was more than just a gimmick for many members of the black metal genre, who began "to challenge the social democratic ideology through various acts of vandalism," according to sociologist Pers Solvang.[80] The members of the scene were not content with propagating anti-Christian lyrics and worshipping evil through their music. The members of the black metal community felt trapped and enslaved by the restraints of Christianity in Norway, and that fact became apparent through their actions.

Shortly after the emergence of Satanic black metal bands, other artists surfaced that blatantly celebrated pagan ideologies. Centered on ancient Norse mythology, bands such as Burzum, Enslaved, Ulver and Emperor combined a harsh metal sound with a mild folk component that celebrated traditional Norwegian culture. Earning the title "Viking Metal," these bands used Norse theology to oppose Christian forces.

These two styles within the black metal movement combined in an attempt to eradicate traces of Christian culture in Norway. As previously mentioned, the most obvious example of rebellion and hatred for Christian culture is through the numerous and frequent church burnings throughout the region. Black metal is truly a subordinate culture in Norway. In order to challenge popular Christianity, black metal threatened their worldview through church arson. These

[80] Torstein Grude, *Satan Rides the Media*, Svend Aavitsland Wolfe, Subfilm in co-production with TV2, 1998.

gestures were statements and rituals designed to attack the Christian establishment and provide this subordinate culture with a sense of power. Although the success of such gestures remains debatable, it nonetheless resulted in another heavy metal moral panic. Authority figures attempted to preserve the status quo of their culture against these subversive individuals. Shortly after the church arsons, certain members of the black metal milieu such as Jorn Inge Thunsburg (guitarist for Hades) and Vargs Vikerne of Burzum were arrested and convicted for the destruction of these sacred properties.

Black Metal and Norwegian Nationalism

It is important to think about black metal, not just as a subversive culture against Christian hegemony but also as a subculture responding to globalization and foreign influence. Although black metal and heavy metal are musical subcultures that react against similar dominant entities, black metal responds uniquely to cultural authority. It takes on a separate national quality because it is reacting to a distinct national issue. Black metal is not just a musical subgenre of heavy metal because it responds to similar issues and is somewhat musically related, but rather something truly "Norwegian" in essence. The church burnings provide an excellent case study when arguing this point. Other foreign influences that we will discuss supplement this conviction.

While responding to a series of questions concerning his conviction for arson of the Asane Church, Jorn Thunsburg replied by saying "it is a statement against Christianity… The most important thing that happened is the church burned down and that is something I stand for…something I will stand for till I die."[81] "Church burnings are something I support one hundred percent and they should be done much more and will be done much more in the future"

[81] *Metal: A Headbangers Journey,* directed by Sam Dunn, Snelville Pictures, Warner Home Video, 2005.

said Gaahl from Gorgoroth[82] In a separate interview, Thunsburg added "Norway should not have been Christianized."[83] Additionally, Bård Guldvik "Faust" Eithun, former drummer for Emperor, said, "the burning of churches symbolize taking back the land from, what many call, the Middle Eastern Plague."[84] So what do all these comments mean? Do they represent adolescent angst against traditional authoritative figures, or do these comments represent other issues at large, possibly something only emblematic of Norwegian culture?

The burning of the Fantoft Stave Church near Bergen represents a symbolic gesture to rid Norway of its unwanted Christian influence. According to Varg Vikernes, "What the Christians did was move this church from another place and put it not close to this holy site but on top of it."[85] During a different interview Vikernes added, "The church is built on holy ground, a natural circle and a stone horg [a pagan alter]. They planted a big cross on the top of the horg and built the church in the midst of the holy place.[86]

According to Vikernes, these fervent actions were committed in retaliation against Christianity. He feels that the Christians purposely disrespected traditional Norwegian culture. These militant gestures attempted to save the archaic Norwegian culture that once permeated the landscape.

Additionally, black metal music took on a distinct native sound and image to counteract the undesired foreign influence. Although heavy metal is not a musical genre indigenous to Scandinavia, the subversive characteristics associated with the global movement would transform and adapt to Norwegian metal culture and be used to liberate Norwegian youth against international influence. Burzum's music clearly represents the national characteristics within black

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[82] *Metal: A Headbangers Journey*, Dunn.
[83]Torstein Grude, *Satan Rides the Media,* Svend Aavitsland Wolfe, Subfilm in co-production with TV2, 1998.
[84]*Until the Light Takes Us,* Aites & Ewell.
[85]*Until the Light Takes US,* Aites & Ewell.
[86]Moynihan and Soderlind, 93.

metal and demonstrates how subversive heavy metal evolved to shape the needs and desires of subservient youth culture in difference cultural spaces.

Burzum's *Balder's Død* (released in 1997) provides an excellent example of the evolutionary patterns of black metal. Contrary to many of the Satanic themes in Burzum's early work, *Balder's Død* tells of the death of the Norse God, Balder. In Norse mythology, this story is of great importance: the death of Balder led to the rise of another God named Holtherus. When viewing the cover of the record, the piece portrays the brutal death of several Viking warriors as they bow in front of Christian missionaries (see appendix 1.5).[87] The death of Balder and the rise of Holtherus serve as a symbol of the death of Viking culture and the ascendancy of Christianity. Other examples include *Hlidskjalf* (1999) which refers to the place where Odin sits to observe the behavior of all beings and *Belus* (2010), which elucidates the importance of the Norse deity of light and how she has, according the Burzum, "played a major role in the forming and shaping of Europe."[88]

Other bands such as Enslaved and Windir additionally demonstrate how black metal evolved and was used to celebrate traditional yet endangered Norwegian culture from Christian presence. These artists would supplement the black metal sound with traditional Norwegian instruments, creating an ambient and emotional element within the movement. Einherjar, which literally translates as "warriors chosen by Odin," provides an additional example of a band that propagates their Norwegian lineage.[89] According to the band, "Einherjer is a Viking's life after death. When a Viking was slain in battle, he was brought up to Valhalla by the Valkyries, for

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[87] Burzum and Varg Vikernes, Hosted by Mother Russia Majordomo, www.burzum.org, 1991-2011 (accessed 4/25/2010).
[88] Burzum and Varg Vikernes, Hosted by Mother Russia Majordomo www.burzum.org, 1991-2011 (accessed 4/25/2012).
[89] John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 104.

them to join the army of Einherjers and join the Gods in their clash against the Giants in the age of Ragnarok."[90] This musical identity, combined with the violent acts of Church desecration, suggests an attempt to eradicate the traces of unwanted and "foreign" Christianity because it is deemed as threat to the antiquated Norwegian tradition.

An expected response to globalization, the continuance of Christian dominance in Norway is suggestive of a problem fostered by Americanization. In 2005, Vikernes remarked:

> I think the growing disregard for the environment, culture and heritage is a natural consequence of capitalism. When people care more about profit than the world they live in that is what happens. Capitalism in the "Western" world in turn is just a natural consequence of Christianity, because Christianity created a spiritual void when it ousted Paganism, and all that is left is materialism and a religion with no meaningful contents.… The concept of multiculturalism is just brain-dead crap, as one culture will eventually prevail at the expense of the other cultures in the same area, so if we wish to see our own culture survive we have to be intolerant and conservative, and reject - and even destroy - alien influences. Today the USA is the main problem in this context, because the USA is doing just like the culture of Carthage did. The USA too conquer by trade. The whole world is flooded in American consumer products. The Coca-Cola company, McDonald's, Levi-Strauss, Microsoft, the Hollywood "entertainment" industry, and so forth, are destroying all cultures on planet Earth, and are trying to replace it with the American lack of culture. This "cultural" imperialism is of course linked to capitalism.[91]

As this passage suggests, the preservation of tradition is absolutely pivotal within the black metal movement. It becomes apparent that black metal is not just an undeveloped subculture centered on musical platitudes such as sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Larger issues of globalization and Americanization that threaten Norwegian tradition helped foster this subculture and cement black metal with passionate ideology despite how radical it might appear to outsiders.

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[90] The Official Myspace of Einherjer, 2003-2010 MySpace.com, www.myspace.com/einherjermusic (accessed 4/25/2010).

[91] Burzum and Varg Vikernes, Hosted by Mother Russia Majordomo, Interview by Chris Mitchell, *Metal Crypt E-Zine*,http://www.burzum.org/eng/library/2005_interview_metalcrypt.shtml (accessed 11/14/2011).

Gender and Race

As discussed in the previous chapter, masculinity is an important component of heavy metal. Throughout its history, artists have adopted a zealous masculine persona to symbolize the power of the music and to provide the culture with an exclusive identity. Everything from their appearance on stage to their lyrical content is suggestive of overwhelming masculinity. Gimmicks such as medieval weaponry and torture devices have made appearances within album art and onstage theatrics. Many bands would perform shirtless to expose their muscles while sometimes singing misogynistic lyrics clearly to display their dominance. Heavy metal has traditionally been a "boy's club."[92] Perhaps it is because the violent musical and lyrical content speaks to the primal instincts in man or possibly because the dance custom of the "Mosh Pit" expresses man's aggressive tendencies. Although women are slowly gravitating to the subculture, we can only speculate as to why it attracts a predominately male following.

Black metal certainly continues this trend. Violent, misanthropic and misogynistic lyrical messages and on-stage spectacles prove this notion to be accurate. It becomes imperative, however, to discuss why the members within the black metal scene felt compelled to reestablish their masculine features as it relates to their race. The individuals within the movement fundamentally transformed metal's masculine characteristic by adding an element of racial identity in an effort to create a unique subculture that substantially deviates from most musical genres.

Gail Bederman, in her book *Manliness and Civilization,* again provides us with an excellent method to theorize black metal as it relates the race and masculinity. Bederman suggests that "the discourses of civilization link both male dominance and white supremacy to a Darwinist

[92] An interview with Deena Weinsteen in Sam Dunn, *Metal: A Headbangers Journey,* Snelville Pictures, Warner Home Video, 2005.

version of Protestant millennialism."[93] Using President Theodore Roosevelt as an example, she concludes that the perfect male race, seen from the eyes of Roosevelt, was a hybrid of civilized Victorian ideals, and masculine primal abilities rooted in ruggedness and barbaric behaviors. All men possessed a certain degree of masculinity; however, it was the Protestant Victorian ideals that distinguished the civilized male from the uncultured male. It would appear that the perfect male stood for an institution of "moral discipline" allowing him to refrain from degenerate immorality. This characteristic was something subordinate males lacked since birth, indicating that moral discipline is an innate quality passed on through lineage.[94]

In an effort to rebel against acceptable and ideal behavior, heavy metal zealously celebrates man's primitive instincts of masculinity and barbaric behavior. It is clear that Protestant ideology required men to act in a civilized manner during formal situations and public settings. This behavior was a quality that feeble or uncivilized men and races inherently lacked. Heavy metal celebrated these characteristics in an attempt to subvert these Protestant and Victorian qualities that are very much present in today's society.

The most effective method for highlighting the parallel of race and gender as it relates to black metal is to connect the primitive ideology embraced by heavy metal and demonstrate how it accommodates the Norwegian movement. Black metal differs because the primitive and barbaric behavior celebrated in previous heavy metal generations is instead linked to traditional Norwegian culture associated with paganism and Viking heritage. This resurgent primitive and barbaric behavior, apparent within black metal, serves as a reminder of a Norwegian's natural state before the emergence of Christianity and the Victorian ethic.

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[93]Bederman, 25.
[94] Daniel Joseph Singal. *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945,* (Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1982), 5.

In 1994, Darkthrone released *Transylvanian Hunger* with a provocative statement printed on the backside of the album. "Norsk Arisk Black Metal" or ("Norwegian Aryan Metal") was a statement that caused quite some controversy. The band insisted the statement meant, "True Norwegian Black Metal," but most people did not accept the translation. Frustrated, the band issued another controversial, follow-up statement saying: "We wish to state that Transylvanian Hunger is beyond criticism, and any man who attempts to do so should be thoroughly patronized for his obvious Jewish behavior."[95] Discouraged with the band, Peaceville dropped Darkthrone from the record label and in response, the band swore to never work with anyone or anything in the business who was not a "true" Norwegian.

The chaotic and primal messages peppered throughout the album clearly renounce civilized and acceptable behaviors. Songs such as "Flitter Mice As Satan's Spies" and "Over Fells and Through Thorns" not only discard the establishment in terms of religion, but additionally celebrate the wilderness and the underdeveloped surroundings. By celebrating the pristine environment before mass urbanization and development, black metal abandons acceptable notions of civilization. The celebrated environmental component indicates that an uncontaminated Norwegian is best represented in his natural environment before civilization. The primitiveness and the anti-Christian messages attempt to eradicate any forms of modernization which "polluted" the "true" Norwegian ethic. Even the deliberately poor production quality of the albums repudiates the cultured and educated establishment in terms of sound engineering. The supplemental component of racial superiority, however, clearly argues that the barbarity and savage-like references is inherent to the true Norwegian male.

Varg Vikernes argued that Odinism and other Norwegian mythological philosophies are exclusively Norwegian faiths. He states, "We are not Christian. Christianity is a Jewish reli-

[95] Biography of Darkthrone, Peaceville Records, http://peaceville.com/bands/2194, 2006 (accessed 03/23/2012).

gion…originally a Jewish sect." He believes the faith was designed to "replace the pagan soul."[96] When combining these anti-Semitic and anti-Christian comments with his nationalistic musical sounds and messages, it comes as no surprise that Vikernes is rumored to have been an active player within the Heathen Front: an organization devoted to ideas of National Socialism, neo-heathenism, anti-Christian ideologies, and environmentalism. Although Vikernes denies these allegations, the Allgermanische Heidnische Front (a more powerful and internationally recognized organization) currently circulates his writings such as the Germansk Mytologiog Verdensanskuelse (Germanic Mythology and Worldview), which some compare to infamous works such as *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter*.[97] Vikernes is also the author of *Vargsmal* which "deals with the history and destiny of his native homeland and appeals to his kinsmen to abandon the materialistic and antihuman 'modernism' in favor of the ancient and heathen beliefs of their elders."[98] Additionally the book provides provocative rhetoric linked to racial supremacy, anti-Christian ideals, and nationalism.[99]

When reviewing these statements, affiliations, writings and criminal convictions, it is obvious that Varg Vikernes is a nationalist with controversial racial views. When one coalesces the violent and misanthropic masculine features within black metal music, with the nationalist ideology centered in Norwegian superiority, Vikernes and his followers appear to want to eradicate all traces of contemporary culture that threaten the former prevalent and rich Norwegian culture. This barbaric and primitive ideology, when using the model provided by Bederman, does not suggest itself as less human or inferior to civilized culture and races, but rather it evokes an original and unspoiled culture and race before the arrival of civilization.

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[96] *Until the Light Takes US*, Aites & Ewell.
[97] Moynihan and Soderlind, 177.
[98] Burzum and Varg Vikernes, Hosted by Mother Russia Majordomo http://www.burzum.org/eng/library/vargsmal.shtml (accessed 11/20/2011).
[99] Moynihan and Soderlind, 165.

Looking back at this behavior, it becomes clear that these activities do not necessarily support the convictions of white supremacists, but something more communally centered in Norwegian lineage. The obvious racial element apparent within black metal is directly related to Norwegian nationalism. The fact that Darthrone exclusively worked with "true Norwegians" after their mishap with Peaceville records proves that some individuals within the movement view their national identity as a separate race apart from other European white ethnicities.

Clearly the youth culture of black metal adopted a nationalist identity to combat dominant influences such as internationalism, globalization, and immigration. The small nation of Norway has produced a subculture that attempted to counter these modern trends by embracing an exclusive racial and national identity. This xenophobic and racist identity is something we need to examine further.

When new cultures settle in Norway, they can unwittingly threaten a customary tribal element that provides the natives with a sense of national identity. John Clarke provides us with a good example of this behavior with his work "The Skinheads & The Magical Recovery of Community," in *Resistance Through Rituals.* The subculture of the Skins in centered on ideas of "territory" and "community." "The underlying social dynamic for this style…is the relative worsening of the situation of the working class."[100] As a result, the Skinhead culture felt excluded from their surrounding environment and developed an "us versus them" mentality. The Skin subculture condemns outsiders that threaten the traditional working-class British communities. This results in xenophobic tendencies and a hyper-masculine virility cemented by violent and gang-like behaviors. This approach can certainly be linked to Norwegian black metal and their sense of "community" and "territory."

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[100] John Clarke, "The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community" in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (Hutchinson & Co 1976), 99.

The individuals with the black metal milieu view modernism as synonymous with materialism, commercialism, globalization and possibly industrialization. The original "community" is a group indigenous to Norway that obviously shares a common "territory" linked to the landscape and the environment. These descriptions of modernism threaten their pristine worldview and prehistoric culture. The once dominant culture throughout Europe diminished with the arrival of Christianity, later followed by immigration, industrialism and globalization. In order to combat the new status quo, black metal evolved to embrace strong anti-Christian values and an Old Norse mythological ideal associated with strong masculine attributes along and certain racial components. In a sense, what we are witnessing is the resurgence of a similar culture that once dominated Europe before the arrival of Christianity. Black metal not only rejects Victorianism, as it is seen by the larger heavy metal milieu, but additionally rejects certain modernist traits in an attempt to reset the culture of Norway to a primal, pre-Christian era.

Black metal signals the end of controversial heavy metal. Although radical metal continues to flourish, no musical genre seems to outperform black metal in terms of absurdity and subversive intent. When reviewing the growth of black metal, it becomes difficult to imagine what the next dissident subculture will look like and what ideology they will rebel against. There is always an underlying factor of competition prevalent among subcultures. A desire to constantly outperform the preceding subculture is the ultimate objective.

Most subcultures, however, fail to successfully subvert the establishment. A common reason for this collapse is due to commodification. When subversive style or art becomes commonly recognized and accepted among collective society, the movement and its aesthetic value fundamentally transforms. Examples of this can be seen in many artistic and musical cultures especially the Avant-Garde. Marcel Duchamp (an early twentieth century French artist) and his

provocative "Ready-Mades" of mass produced objects, provide us with a good example of evolutionary impulses within the avant-garde and subculture. Duchamp's "Ready-Mades" demonstrated an explicit negation of an artist's individual expression.[101] Duchamp subverted dominant culture and the hegemonic encoded meaning within popular art by mocking its intentions and its intrinsic value. Initially intended to shock the established artistic milieu, Duchamp's "Ready-Mades" instead gained extreme popularity that attracted the attention of many frustrated individuals within the art establishment. Peter Burger, author of *Theory of The Avant-Garde,* argues that once "the protest of the historical avant-garde against art as institution is accepted as art, the gesture of protest of the neo-avant-garde becomes inauthentic."[102] Once this display of mockery or rejection becomes accepted as art, any attempt to provoke simply concedes to the current trend and no longer displays an authentic message of rebellion.

This model successfully captures the black metal movement. It appears the church burnings and other provocative behaviors within the black metal movement triggered international attention and popularity. This coverage attracted the interest of many youth cultures worldwide. As a result, the movement became a mass produced commodity losing its once forbidden and mysterious image. The movement seems to encompass many of the traits it formerly rebelled against. For example, the movement globalized, becoming the most exported musical item from Norway.[103] Furthermore, the once harsh and poor production element used to rebel against sound quality is currently recognized as a common style providing future generational black metal artists with a recipe for recreation.

However this global phenomenon cannot suitably be labeled black metal. Many of the original actors involved within the preliminary black metal subculture have either stopped per-

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[101] Peter Burger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
[102] Burger, 52-53.
[103] *Murder Music: A History of Black Metal.*

forming altogether or have fundamentally altered their musical sound. Darkthrone, for example, is currently producing techno sounds while Emperor disbanded permanently with former members producing a variety of music outside the black metal scene. Although Mayhem and Gorgoroth still perform and continue to develop their sound, the provocative element within the music seems more common place than controversial. Black metal, then, appears to have slowly died when the movement became emblematic of the characteristics it formally rebelled against.

4. CONCLUSION

Around 1000AD, the rulers of Norway were heavily engaged in foreign trade, wars and pilgrimages. As a result of these interactions, King Olaf I and later King Olaf II introduced Christianity in Norway after being exposed and baptized in the faith overseas. Both encouraged many foreign bishops and priests to make the journey to Norway to aid the transition from Paganism to Christianity.[104] The conversion to Christianity, however, did not go smoothly. Olaf II was a violent ruler that forcibly introduced Christianity to many resistant Norwegian villages. Rumors suggest that, in response to his ruthlessness, his own Christian subjects drove him to exile in Russia.[105] Throughout the long conversion process, rulers of Norway strategically placed Christian churches and symbols on tops of sacred Pagan sites as a symbol of disrespect. With time, however, the Norwegian people accommodated this change. King Olaf II became the first ruler to unite the country under Christianity.[106] Over the centuries, Norway became an overwhelmingly Protestant nation.

Considering these circumstances, it does appear the conversion to Christianity in Norway was heavily influenced by people from other European nations. It also appears, despite the growth and success of Christianity, that Norwegians are still very much connected to their Viking heritage and their pagan faith. But why, 1000 years later, did the youth culture of black metal feel compelled to continue to resist Christianity?

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[104] Sverre Bagge and Sabjorg Nordeide, "The Kingdom of Norway." In *Christianization and The Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200*, edited by Nora Bernard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 121-166.
[105] *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Germanic religion and mythology," http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/231102/Germanic-religion-and-mythology (accessed 3/24/2012).
[106] *Encyclopedia of World Biography online*, s.v."*Olaf II."* http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404704848.html (accessed 3/24/12).

If the arrival of Christianity was indeed unwelcome for many Norwegians during the early eleventh century, then it is certainly understandable as to why this faith was considered "foreign." It is also easy to fathom why some individuals resisted this change. This anti-Christian sentiment, however, seems to only makes sense when linking it to the events of 1000 years ago. When black metal erupted several centuries later harboring similar anti-Christian feelings, we have to ask ourselves, what common links do these two events share? When connecting these events of the past to modern black metal, it appears similar issues are at play.

Modern Norway is a nation that is experiencing similar foreign influences, particularly immigration. Between the years of 1990-2009, a total of 420,000 non-Nordic people immigrated to Norway and almost one-half were immigrants from Asia, Africa, or Latin-America.[107] Considering the fact that Norway consists of about five million people, this is a staggeringly high percent of immigrants. Additionally, these immigrants are bringing their cultures, customs, and languages to Norway. This could help explain the xenophobic and nationalistic tendencies of some of the members within the black metal scene. The effects of globalization and world-trade have transformed Norway into a melting-pot nation, inadvertently destroying some its traditions and its histories.

Contemporary Norway, as well as other European nations, is a region that seems to have serious problems concerning nationalism. In the summer of 2011, Anders Breivik terrorized the citizens of Norway, killing dozens of innocent and defenseless people. This attack was done in protest against a "Marxist" Norway that additionally catered to internationalism, immigration and Islam. Although this attack dramatically exceeds the actions within the black metal milieu, it does appear they share anxieties about potential threats to national homogeneity.

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[107] Statistics Norway, http://www.ssb.no/innvandring_en/ (accessed March 19, 2012).

Similar to Varg Vikernes and his connections to the Heathen Front, Breivik was apparently in close contact with comparable extremist groups such as the European Military Order, the English Defense League and the Criminal Tribunal of Knights of Templar (groups dedicated to the expulsion of Islam and the protection of white Europe).[108] Additionally, it appears Breivik also possessed a hyper-masculine fervor, similar to that of many black metal enthusiasts. According to Michelle Goldberg (a journalist for the *Daily Beast*), the attacks in Norway were motivated by an anti-feminist enthusiasm. Breivik's manifesto, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence" blames modern feminism for the destruction of Europe and the growth of Islam.[109] According to Breivik and other ultra-conservative ideologues, feminism threatens a patriarchal social order that is related, inevitably, to declining birth rates in white or western populations. As a result, this apparently permits other religions and races to settle in and take over any given area through increased rates of reproduction. The hyper-masculine characteristic within the black metal scene seems to connect with these other, far Right ideologies in Europe. It appears European (especially Norwegian) women are then reduced to a role of pronatalism (the practice of encouraging child bearing) to counter the rise of foreign peoples and the threats they pose to traditional European cultures. Although black metal artists and listeners fight Christianity rather than Islam, they nonetheless share a similar xenophobic conviction. They, instead, reduce the "problem" of foreign influence back to the arrival of Christianity. The ideal Norway, according to some black metal enthusiasts, is a nation that was pure and pristine before the rise

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[108] William Underhill, "Britain's Right-Wing Hate," *The Daily Beast*, June 25, 2011. http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/07/25/anders-breivik-s-manifesto-echoes-loudly-in-britain.html, (accessed, March 19, 2012.)

[109] Michelle Goldberg, "Norway Killer's Hated of Women," *The Daily Beast*, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/07/24/norway-massacre-anders-breivik-s-deadly-attack-fueled-by-hatred-of-women.html (accessed March 19, 2012).

of Islamic influence and especially before Christianity. To facilitate this conviction, it seems European patriarchy must prevail over apparent Islamic intrusions.

The Florida death metal movement appears to neglect the anti-immigrant and xenophobic fervor within black metal. An anti-Christian enthusiasm, however, is a characteristic both genres strongly support and share. Christianity, nevertheless, takes on differing characteristics within the death metal movement. It is not a philosophy viewed as foreign or un-American but rather a belief system indigenous to the United States, especially the American South. Rebelling against the Christian establishment was not a campaign that attempted to reset the American social environment to a more "unspoiled" period. Rather, rebellion was a condition of American (especially Southern) modernity in response to an outdated social landscape. As we witnessed, however, this was not a smooth break with the past. Florida death metal could not escape the grasp of Southern patriarchy. Additionally, it could not break free from aspects of stereotypical Southern virility, such as fighting and violence.

The intentions of death metal patriarchy are unclear. It does not appear, however, that this characteristic was exercised to reduce females to a role of pronatalism in order to combat an intruding and unwanted foreign presence. The death metal movement did, nonetheless, dramatically exceed the boundaries of the Old South mentality. It appears black metal rebelled against the social establishment to restore or perhaps preserve the Norwegian past while Florida death metal rebelled to escape the American past.

Final Thoughts

This paper has highlighted the Norwegian transformation from paganism to Christianity. Additionally, this paper has captured the Norwegian change from a Viking civilization to a mod-

ern civilization. We have seen black metal ascend to battle against modern Norway, to eradicate the present, and restore the past. This essay has illustrated the struggle and conversions of Southern culture against the changes of a growing and modern South. Additionally, we have placed Florida within the context of an evolving South and have concluded that it was more socially progressive than the South at large. We have used the issues of race, religion and gender to demonstrate these transformations over time.

Despite these conclusions, however, some additional questions inevitably arise. What is the next stage of heavy metal subculture? Are the individuals in Norway going to accept the nation in its present state or will they continue to fight against modern Scandinavia? What is going to be the next phase of heavy metal in the United States and the American South?

Furthermore, we are presently witnessing the growth of Southern sludge metal (a bluesy/Southern rock heavy metal style). Will this style continue to possess a distinct regional identity centered on Old South nostalgia or will it branch out and become a national musical phenomenon? Is the North going to produce its own unique style of heavy metal to counter the resurgent subcultural South? Will the country perhaps stop fragmenting subculture into regions and possibly unite to produce a distinct "American" heavy metal subculture?

Whatever the answers are to these questions, only one thing seems clear. Heavy metal will probably continue to grow and produce new sounds, styles and, of course, some controversy. When reviewing popular music in the twentieth century, it appears heavy metal is one of the few styles that continue to evolve. Although certain subgenres of metal lose subcultural potency, the genre as a whole continues to grow. Heavy metal continues to shape, mold and adapt to the constant changes of modern society in a much different manner than other late twentieth century subcultures.

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APPENDIX

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.3

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5