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Voice of our blood:

National Socialist discourses in black metal

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Abstract

Black metal defines itself to a large degree through transgression, alienation and provocation, and in western culture, few things are more transgressive, alienating and provocative than neo-Nazism. In this article on National Socialist black metal (NSBM), the author demonstrates how certain forms of metal can be controversial and counter-cultural within the wider metal scene itself. In discursive terms, NSBM may fit in well with the pagan, Satanic and nationalist concerns of black metal, but as the author argues, 'the majority of black metalers are unwilling to cross the threshold of the radical-right'. This is not necessarily because of any principled objection to racism, more because of a discomfort with the literalism and narrowness that would focus black metal's misanthropy onto any one sub-set of humanity. NSBM's political connotations also threaten black metal's cherished sense of independence and individualism. The author concludes that, even if black metal's symbolism will continue to be appropriated by the extreme right, NSBM is likely to remain a marginal phenomenon.

Keywords: black metal; moral panic; nationalism; neo-Nazism; Satanism

'Some people are larger than life. Hitler is larger than death' (Don DeLillo, *White Noise*).

National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) has been highly influential throughout the international black metal scene since the millennium (Gardell 2003: 285). While NSBM is in no small part influenced by Varg Vikernes and his transformation into an Old Norse pagan neo-Nazi after his incarceration, the NSBM movement is far more than the result of younger black metalers mimicking a figure with proven extremist credentials. Black metal defines itself to a large degree through trans-

gression, alienation and provocation, and in western culture, few things are more transgressive, alienating and provocative than neo-Nazism.

As Keith Khan-Harris writes in his analysis of extreme metal: 'In many ways Nazis are *the* preeminent transgressive symbol in the modern world' (Kahn-Harris 2007: 41). National Socialist discourses also speak to notions of place, history, identity and traditional culture that are endemic to black metal of all persuasions (Moynihan and Söderlind 2003: 33–43). In this article, I describe the ways that NSBM utilizes discourses concerning race, nation and culture, as well as the ways that those discourses are contested by non-racist black metalers. Racism and neo-Nazism force black metalers to confront the ambiguity of hatred and define the limits of transgression in a globalized black metal scene.

Neo-Nazism is nothing new to transgressive music-based youth culture; neo-Nazi punk, or 'white noise', has been widely distributed throughout the far-right underground for nearly three decades (Gardell 2003: 69–70). Black metal is unique in the world of racist rock in that it has been endowed with a militant, fanatic quality carried over from the Norwegian church-burning days. It is also decidedly anti-Christian, which gives it a hyper-transgressive quality to participants sympathetic to neo-Nazi ideology, but bored with the rhetoric of Christian Identity and other racist Christian groups (Lee 2000: 338). NSBM is also indelibly linked with *Asá Trú* (a reconstructed version of old Norse paganism) and dismissive of Satanism, which gives it a 'blood and soil' attraction to many young neo-Nazis looking for identity in their distant, ancestral past. Satanic black metalers are usually dismissive of NSBM, and vice versa. Many *Asá Trú*ers also take great offense at their religion being used as justification for racist ideology. With that in mind, the majority of NSBM articulates a neo-pagan, usually Old Norse perspective.

What is perhaps even more significant than why some black metalers accept neo-Nazi ideology is why most black metalers reject it. Many black metalers whole-heartedly accept National Socialism, while others vitriolically condemn it, and many others look upon it with vague scepticism and indifference (Moynihan and Söderlind 2003: 347–56). Black metal brings basic questions of morality, identity and 'goodness' into question; why, then, balk at racist and genocidal ideologies? Most black metalers have no problem speaking about their hatred of Christians and Christianity, but many are uncomfortable adding Judaism and discourses of race into this equation. Black metal prides itself on being hyper-transgressive and iconoclastic, but the majority of black metalers are unwilling to cross the threshold of the radical-right. In this article, I will explain how and why this unwillingness occurs.

Even 'mainstream' neo-Nazis often express confusion, disgust and fear when confronted with the bizarre sight of a corpse-painted, orc-like creature vomiting

blood in front of a swastika (Gardell 2003: 304–307). This radical departure from humanity, modernity and rationality is a major aspect of black metal's appeal. In some cases this is all NSBM is: one more transgressive signifier among many others. For others, notions of ultra-nationalism and militant racism take on deeply meaningful connotations when placed within a black metal context. Black metal, in all of its forms, glorifies the distant past and seeks to annihilate the mundane present. Neo-Nazism makes this assertion very simple by imposing notions of otherness onto virtually everyone unlike oneself and elevating the angry, megalomaniacal black metaler to the status of a God among sheep. Notions of modernity and civilization seem vague and intellectual to many black metalers; race, nation and tradition are less so (Kahn-Harris 2007: 41). NSBM utilizes logic very similar to that of non-racist black metal: the present is sick and degraded; the past was glorious and vital; the present must be destroyed and/or escaped in order to attain a meaningful existence. The primary difference for NSBM is the polarization of the them/us dichotomy into strictly racial and national categories. This dichotomy, like much of the cultural activity evident in black metal, attempts to reconcile the paradox of hyper-individuality and empowerment through group identity.

Norsk Arisk black metal

Like all of black metal culture, NSBM began in the Nordic countries. Many of the early Norwegian bands flirted with neo-Nazi imagery and ideology, but prior to Varg Vikernes' murder conviction, swastikas and racism were largely provocations; one example of misanthropy among many. In the infamous 1993 *Kerrang!* article, Vikernes exclaims: 'I support all dictatorships—Stalin, Hitler, Ceaucescu—and I will become the dictator to Scandinavia myself' (Moynihan and Söderlind 2003: 101)! During the early days of the scene, misanthropy, not politics, was the order of the day. Euronymous himself was an avowed Stalinist, believing that brutal totalitarian communism was the perfect expression of his misanthropy and the will of Satan (*Close-Up* 1992). Politics was a method of taboo transgression in the early 90s, one of the less important methods compared to religion, violence and general misanthropy.

During his imprisonment Vikernes fully embraced his role as a far-right ideologue (Burzum.org). He has, however, become a hero and a martyr to the international NSBM movement, a role he has not declined. Upon his release from prison in 2009 Vikernes once again took up the black metal banner, releasing a new album and gracing the covers of both *Decibel* and *Terrorizer* (Bennett 2010; Minton 2010). The combination of Asá Trű and racism that Vikernes espouses has been embraced by a large section of the Asá Trű groups in the world, usually identifying themselves as Odinists as opposed to more neutral terms like Asá Trű or Heathen

(Durham 2007: 72–73). Vikernes explains the relationship between his attacks on Christianity and his anti-Semitism:

There was a t-shirt that øystein printed that said 'Kill the Christians!' I think that is ridiculous. What's the logic in that? Why should we kill our brothers? They're just temporarily asleep, entranced. We have to say, 'Hey, wake up!' That's what we have to do, wake them up from the Jewish trance. We don't have to kill them because that would be killing ourselves, because they are part of us (Moynihan and Söderlind 2003: 163).

Here we see a radical departure from the earlier rhetoric of Norwegian black metal: Vikernes asserts that Christians are the victims of an anti-human other, and they must be 'awakened' and mobilized. This is a significant shift away from the generalized misanthropy and denial of humanity, goodness, and progress that characterized the ranting of Euronymous and the early declarations of Vikernes himself. During this period Vikernes may have concluded that Satanism had only limited value as a transgressive signifier and that Satanists would inevitably be viewed as children playing dress-up by the larger culture. In a very real sense, these kinds of statements mark the end of Vikernes' career as a black metal ideologue, and the beginning of his career as a neo-Nazi ideologue whose rhetoric is not very divergent from hundreds of far-right ideologues all over the world.

Although various Norwegian scene members flirted with neo-Nazi imagery prior to Vikernes' conversion in prison, the Norwegian scene was relatively apolitical during the early 90s. Ihsahn and Samoth from Emperor explain their feelings regarding racism and far-right politics in an interview with *Terrorizer*:

Samoth: 'Well that's something Vikernes started'.

Ihsahn: 'As I have said before, I feel black metal should have nothing to do with politics. It's not a political thing, it's something more spiritual. I realize that many people think that fascism, Satanism and black metal are one and the same, probably because they are all extreme ideologies.'

Terrorizer: Plus it's not such a great leap from the strong over the weak philosophy, which is an integral part of Satanism, to fascism.

Samoth: 'That's something I can identify with, but that doesn't mean I wear a swastika and worship Adolf Hitler or whatever.'

Ihsahn: 'If we look down on anything, then it is humanity as a whole. It's rather naïve to think that your intelligence is based on the colour of your skin. Of course, there are cultures which are hard to understand for people in different countries, but I think that's positive as well. Like in the States, everything gets mixed together. They have no old culture at all. I think it's important to keep different cultures as they are, because so many cultures have been lost because of the Christian religion. Like you have Christian missions going into the jungle and forcing their religion upon tribes that have been living on a very primitive basis for thousands of years. What do they need Christianity for?' (Whalen 1997).

This quote reiterates black metal's reverence for the 'primitive'. For Ihsahn, and many other black metalers, their hatred for modernity trumps the transgressive qualities of National Socialism. In this interview, Emperor reference pre-industrial cultures as being closer to the medieval golden age that they aspire to than the mediocrity and cultural pluralism of the United States or contemporary Western Europe. The racism inherent in National Socialism excludes those pre-industrial peoples who remain untouched by Christianity and is therefore contraindicated for the black metal worldview.

The Satanism and individualism of much of the Norwegian scene is often in conflict with National Socialist ideology. King, formerly of Gorgoroth and currently working under the moniker Ov Hell, asserts:

NSBM as a movement is more or less made up. It's only kids using words to spread some kind of fear to be shocking in a way. Nazism to me is a flock ideology. Black metal, or at least Gorgoroth, is about the individual and creating your own moral out of chaos, and be your own God more or less (Zebub, dir. 2006).

King's contention that Satanism and National Socialism are ideologically incompatible is repeatedly echoed by anti-Nazi Satanists, most notably Gavin Baddeley (Baddeley 1999: 148–59). Satanic black metalers place a great deal of emphasis on individualism and self-creation, aspects that National Socialism is awkwardly adapted to. The attempt to adapt neo-Nazi ideology to an arch-individualist credo is yet another attempt to reconcile the contradiction between the self and the group that runs throughout black metal culture. It is far less successful in doing so than other methods, and NSBM tends to place less emphasis on individualism than do other types of black metal.

USNSBM

North America, the United States in particular, has become one of the most prolific producers of NSBM in the last ten years. This is partially due to the long-standing racist underground and existent infrastructure to produce and distribute racist and neo-Nazi material, as well as constitutional protections for free speech that do not exist in countries like Germany (Durham 2007: 31–32). Resistance Records has been particularly important in promoting 'pro-white' music and has in recent years begun to distribute NSBM bands. NSBM is a contentious issue within the militant racist counter-culture, as black metal in all of its forms is fairly anti-Christian and continues to carry connotations of Satanism with it, although very few NSBM bands identify with Satanism. NSBM in the United States, more so than in other parts of the world, works in conjunction with the larger National Socialist and militant racist counter-culture, garnering little respect or audience outside of that circle as a result.

Vinland Winds records was an independent label dedicated primarily to NSBM and was run by Richard P. Mills, a.k.a. Grimnir Wotansvolk, a.k.a. G. Heretik, front-man for NSBM stalwarts Grand Belial's Key until his mysterious death in 2006 (vinlandwinds.com). In a 2005 interview with the zine *Nihilistic*, Mills pontificates about his lyrical motivations:

The lyrics deal with religious topics that go deeper than the early days of Christianity. The true roots of this pestilence are explored, exploring pre-Christian Judaism and its gross culture. Disgust in others and pride in ourselves inspire us to express our bigotry through music. I think that our latest release, and songs like *Vultures Of Misfortune*, paint a great picture of the horrific ways of ancient Jewish culture and their customs. I am offended by the poor quality of music that my peers are recording. Musically, I hope to bring something unique to the table. All our lyrics express an enmity for Juden-Christianity, and endless sadistic cynicism which mocks and ridicules the religion with a twisted sense of sarcasm (*Nihilistic* 2005).

We see in this quotation a common tactic among NSBM ideologues, particularly in the US: the extension of hostility towards Christianity to hostility towards Judaism. NSBM bands attempt to make their anti-Semitism more palatable to people outside of the scene by equating anti-Semitism with anti-Christian sentiments that are far more accepted within extreme metal. NSBM tries to achieve an ideological bait-and-switch; equating enmity towards a powerful majority, with enmity towards a marginalized minority.

Antiracist watchdog groups in the US like the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), while taking notice of NSBM, have represented it with varying degrees of accuracy. In a 1999 report titled *Sounds of Violence* the SPLC describe their perceptions of USNSBM: 'Today's new generation of metal bands, known as the black metal underground, is so extreme it makes Marilyn Manson look square. For those who want to turn teenage angst into hatred, this metal scene is a natural target' (Ward, Lunsford and Massa 1999). *Sounds of Violence* contextualizes itself within the long-standing tradition of parent-directed hysteria that has been taken to an extreme by people like Carl A. Raschke in his fanciful 1990 scree *Painted Black*, which asserts that heavy metal is but one part of a wide-ranging Satanic conspiracy (Raschke 1990). Moral panics and contemporary legends concerning Satanic conspiracies attempting to infiltrate American culture have been well documented by scholars of conspiracy theory and American folklore. Jeffrey S. Victor's *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, Bill Ellis' *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media*, as well as Gary Alan Fine and Patricia A. Turner's *Whispers on the Color Line: Rumor and Race in America* all chart in fascinating detail the construction and proliferation of contemporary legends concerning Satanic conspiracies and their unholy designs for America's children (Victor 1993; Ellis 2000;

Fine and Turner 2001). Unfortunately, in *Sounds of Violence*, the SPLC place themselves within this tradition of feverish hysteria, making neo-Nazism and Satanism synonymous terms while ignoring the complicated cultural and ideological politics involved.

Sounds of Violence asserts that all Satanic, racist, or vaguely suspicious-seeming bands can be branded as National Socialist black metal. The report does seem less interested in delineating musical or aesthetic qualities that might contribute to a definition of black metal; if a band or artist uses both Satanic and far-right symbolism, that apparently constitutes NSBM as far as the authors are concerned. As we have seen, Satanism and neo-Nazism rarely go hand-in-hand in the black metal world. *Sounds of Violence* claims that the industrial bands Electric Hellfire Club and Blood Axis are both black metal bands, which they are not. The report goes on to describe Boyd Rice and his band NON as being, 'often referred to as the vanguard of the American black metal scene' (Ward, Lunsford and Massa 1999). Although Rice has connections to the far-right, he has never produced black metal of any kind. Although there have been strains of Satanism that have allied themselves with neo-Nazism, Satanic NSBM is quite rare. *Sounds of Violence* goes on to argue: 'Among others, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris—who murdered 12 of their classmates and a teacher at Columbine High School in Colorado last April—were said to have been influenced by this kind of music' (Ward, Lunsford and Massa 1999). This claim is repeated in Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's book *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (Goodrick-Clark 2003: 209–10). There is no hard evidence of any sort to suggest that the Columbine tragedy was even tenuously associated with black metal. These distortions point to a general misunderstanding of youth culture, an impulse towards moral panic, and a climate of religious hysteria within many factions of American culture. Specificity dissolves in frantic attempts to sensationalize aberrations of teenage ideology.

Black metal, and NSBM in particular, are certainly ripe for sensationalism, but attempts to brand every form of teenage racism or violence as manifestations of neo-Nazi black metal are misguided. In the decade since *Sounds of Violence*'s publication, neo-Nazi websites have gleefully posted some of the report's more inaccurate claims as evidence of the SPLC's dishonesty (www.nsbm.org/media/splc_report.html). In failing to sufficiently research and accurately represent the youth cultures they discuss, the SPLC undermine their worthwhile project and give ammunition to the potentially dangerous hate groups that they target. One year after the publication of *Sounds of Violence*, the SPLC released a more sober and accurate assessment of NSBM entitled *Darker than Black* (Potok 2000).

Resistance Records, the most prominent white power record label in North America, was purchased in 1999 by William Pierce, head of the National Alli-

ance, one of the largest militant racist groups in the US, prior to his death in 2002 (Gardell 2003: 135). *Resistance* subsequently acquired the independent label *Unholy* which is dedicated almost exclusively to NSBM (Bennett 2006). In researching this section, I was given the opportunity to interview Pierce's successor, Erich Gliebe, current head of both Resistance Records and the National Alliance, who has been largely responsible for the popularity of NSBM in North America. Gliebe explained the steady rise of NSBM in North America since the late 90s and its ability to create inroads into groups of young people that other types of racist music have been unable to reach. Part of NSBM's popularity, Gliebe explained, was due to its pro-pagan and anti-Satanic attitude:

We have no part in that Satanic stuff, that's exactly what we are against. We are totally against that Satanic nonsense. There are many people in the NSBM scene that would like to see the whole scene cleaned out of all the Satanic stuff... We consider Satanism to be a Jewish creation. The people, of course, in the NSBM scene don't believe in the bible, we basically see it as Hebrew mythology. So that is where the figure of Satan comes from, and when somebody is talking about Satan, we consider it to be just a character in the bible (interview with Erich Gliebe, 8 February 2008).

NSBM, particularly in North America, tends to characterize Christianity as being some type of sinister Jewish trick to subvert the minds of Euro-Americans. Gliebe is emphatic in his insistence that NSBM has no connection with Satanism and draws its strength from the culture and heritage of pre-Christian Europe. NSBM takes its cultural paradigms straight from the apolitical Norwegian scene, but modifies them slightly to fit a racist/neo-Nazi political agenda.

Visually most NSBM eschews the corpse-paint, spikes and other fantastical aesthetics that characterize other forms of black metal. Artists often present themselves visually as primordial Vikings returned from some pure, uncorrupted past to save the present from multiculturalism. Equally common is the tactic to remain faceless and anonymous; artists can represent themselves with nothing more than an unspoiled landscape on an album cover. This tactic allows NSBM artists to convey a sense of underground mystery; an anonymity that connotes the avoidance of governmental agencies or other perceived racial enemies.

Some of Gliebe's most fascinating insights were in reference to NSBM's approach to the group/individual paradox that is so central to black metal culture. Gliebe explained to me the NSBM fan's tendency towards isolation:

I have noticed with a lot of NSBM types, a lot of them don't associate in cliques. They do their own thing. I would say they are more creative and more spiritual than someone into your more typical pro-white music... A lot of white kids, they don't want to be told what to do. They don't want to get their hair cut. I don't think that a lot of the NSBM people out there are really into any kind of clique,

they may have friends on the internet and they might go to concerts, but there are not big groups of them like there are big groups of skinheads (interview with Erich Gliebe, 8 February 2008).

Gliebe attempts to characterize NSBM fans as more intellectual and less gang-like; if skinheads are the new storm-troopers, then NSBMers are the new intellectual elite, propagandists, ideologues and mystics. Gliebe articulates the tendency within North American black metal to reject group identities in the traditional subcultural sense in favor of virtual groups and temporary groups like those found at concerts. Black metal constantly negotiates the paradox between singular and group identities, but rarely with any long-term success.

Gliebe would have us believe that notions of race allow black metalers to identify with their 'true identity' while also maintaining individual autonomy:

I don't see BM as being part of some anarchist scene where everyone just does their own thing. I think it binds people together. In a way they do want to get away from the herd mentality, it's true because they tend to not belong to any organization. They don't have patches on their jackets that say "such and such a place black metal," like skinheads do. A lots of black metalers, whether they admit it or not, are part of a larger group: the race. Black metalers would freak out if one day they went to a concert and half the audience was black and had dreadlocks (8 February 2008).

Gliebe attempts to impose a specific, unavoidable notion of group on black metal; that of race. The fact that black metal is wildly popular in Latin America and other 'non-white' regions of the world, and that non-racist black metalers tour in those regions with the greatest enthusiasm, seems to have escaped Gliebe (Kahn-Harris 2007: 70–71). The fact that many black metalers often do wear patches endorsing region-specific black metal may indicate Gliebe's relative inexperience with black metal beyond the NSBM he is familiar with. When I read to Gliebe the quote from King denouncing NSBM, quoted earlier in this article, Gliebe responded:

King might say those things, but I think he has a racial consciousness whether he admits it or not, and that he would prefer to live in a white neighborhood. We do have room for individualism. We encourage people to pursue their own interest and their own occupations and hobbies without causing any detriment to the race (8 February 2008).

It is very unlikely that King's hyper-individualism would sit well with Gliebe or any other NSBMer; it's certain that King's Satanism would not. NSBM attempts to unite black metalers under the banner of race. For the vast majority of black metalers, in the US as well as elsewhere, the homogenizing effects inherent in National Socialism and its de-emphasis of individuality and free-will are simply incompatible with black metal culture.

Far-right propaganda aside, the majority of US black metalers have little interest in National Socialism or racist ideology. As we have seen in the Norwegian scene, most US black metalers approach NSBM ideology with ambivalence and a certain degree of skepticism, but rarely open condemnation. Xasthur, a highly respected one-man black metal band from California, explains his feelings on the subject of NSBM:

I don't mind it, they have their reasons for their beliefs, who's really to say who are the real one's [*sic*] behind it and who isn't? I am not in any way affiliated with National Socialism, yet in layman's terms I see it, or they may see it as a fist in the face of a liberal society. When humans are given too much freedom, they often abuse it, being free to overpopulate and let everything go to shit. But then again, if National Socialism came into power, into effect in their own countries, I think there would end up being a lot of details to it that they wouldn't like about it. I would say I'm a fan of some of these bands like Gontyna Kry, Veles, Kataxu etc.... as they play some dark, grim and hateful black metal (*Maelstrom* 2004).

Xasthur's comments are fairly typical of most black metalers' feelings towards neo-Nazism: distrust mixed with a hesitancy to condemn an ideology with such intense transgressive power. While unwilling to overtly reject an ideology that instills fear and outrage in all corners of mainstream culture, an ideology that is often proffered as the definition of evil, the majority of black metalers understand that National Socialism is anathema to their project and that they would be the first against the wall if neo-Nazis ever got their way.

Wolves in the Throne Room (WITTR) are one of the US black metal bands who vigorously oppose racism and neo-Nazism. In a statement on their Myspace page, WITTR assert their opposition to NSBM:

In scores of interviews we have expressed our deep philosophical and spiritual opposition to racism, anti-Semitism, authoritarianism and the glorification of war. We have specifically condemned National Socialism and the bands who explicitly or implicitly endorse these simple-minded and weak ideas (*Myspace.com* 2008).

In black metal terminology, 'simple-minded', and 'weak' are two of the most condemnatory adjectives at their disposal. Anti-racist black metalers attack NSBMers for following a collective, herd mentality and denying the pure, pre-Christian character of pre-industrial 'non-white' people. NSBMers accuse anti-racist black metalers of denying the voice of their blood and ancestry. The disagreement comes back to the conflict between those who emphasize a resonant ancestral culture, accessible through the blood and psychological archetypes, and those who emphasize individualism, self-creation and the rejection of modernity, regardless of its political manifestation.

NSBM in the United States has a lot going for it: relatively free speech, entrenched racism and large, well-funded groups like the National Alliance to give them support, financially and otherwise. The majority of black metal enthusiasts in the United States offer NSBM little beyond sarcasm, as the May 2006 feature on NSBM in *Decibel* illustrates:

As if acting out some bizarre atavistic saga—half comedy, half high drama—our protagonists assume their marks in the theatre of the absurd. Somewhere not-so-deep in the sub-underground, the forces of National Socialist Black Metal—henceforth known as NSBM—are circling their Panzer tanks (or at very least their amplifiers) against the evil forces of Jewry, Niggerdom and Fagitude. No, wait—the NSBM dudes are the evil ones (Evil is, after all, a requirement of all black metal) and they're aligning themselves against the Zionist Occupation Government, jungle fever and same-sex marriage. Or is it Israel, multiculturalism and gay bars? Point is, if it ain't white—and straight, and pagan—it ain't right (Bennett 2006).

As the thinly veiled mockery of Bennett's article illustrates, NSBM is not likely to gain much political support outside of its already established base of skinheads and neo-Nazis. For the majority of American black metalers, racism has only limited transgressive value.

Ukrainian insurgent army

Eastern Europe has one of the most vibrant, fanatic and racist black metal scenes in the world. Poland has a fairly rich tradition of extreme metal, with bands like Vader and Behemoth gaining international popularity since the early 90s, as well as a flourishing racist and far-right movement (Hockenos 1996: 193–296). Russia and Ukraine have seen an explosion of fascist, racist and ultra-nationalist activity since the fall of the Soviet Union, with metal, and more recently black metal, playing an important role in the now thriving far-right movement (Shenfield 2001, chapter 3). Black metal in Eastern Europe has taken on a fanatic, genocidal tone that is reminiscent of the bombastic proclamations of the early Norwegian scene, but with decidedly neo-Nazi overtones. The political chaos, poverty, corruption, and organized crime of the former Soviet Union has created a volatile and fanatic NSBM underground across Eastern Europe (Hockenos 1996: 193).

With the exception of Burzum, Poland's Graveland are perhaps the most revered NSBM band in the world. Regarding his band's origins, Graveland's only permanent member Darken explains to *Pit* magazine:

Graveland was born at the beginning. Time did not exist then; there was only darkness. Graveland was born from hate dreaming in our lands. We take revenge for our dying ancestors who protected our pagan lands from our foes who wanted to destroy the harmony of nature. Christianity brought false good-

ness... Graveland knew this. Our souls burn with fire of hate and retribution! Aryan race wake up! The new era of paganism and darkness is coming. Graveland will show you the way. Start the holocaust again, kill Jews and Christians. Destroy the false god of Jesus Christ! I, Darken, the Black Druid of Darkness, Karcharoth of Infernum and Capricornus are the spirits of war. We come from the land of everlasting funerals; from the unholy winter. We are three angels of retribution. War! (*Pit*, issue 15)

Rhetoric of this type is rare among NSBM in North America. Graveland asserts that it is a spiritual entity, some type of mystical force outside of time. Darken's statements are genocidal, apocalyptic and very much in reference to the early Norwegian scene's interest in 'darkness' and 'evil'. Although Darken is an outspoken pagan, his rhetoric is clearly inspired by Satanic Nordic black metalers like Euronymous and It. Graveland's pontifications are partially designed to establish cultural capital; in the 90s black metal, particularly outside of Norway, had to be as uncompromising as possible to be taken seriously. However, shock and transgression are not the only reason for this type of extreme oratory. As we have seen, black metal combines hyper-transgression with mystical religious ideas that offer participants a method for transcending the mundane, escaping modernity and the creation of highly empowering identities. Although blasphemy is illegal in Poland, some Polish bands seem to have concluded that Satanism and anti-Christianity lack the connection to a romantic past that they desire. In the former Soviet bloc, modernity has taken a particularly grim and unappealing form, causing eastern European black metalers to be particularly keen to escape it.

Ukraine has produced some of the most internationally respected black metal of the new millennium, and almost all of it is NSBM. The Ukrainian scene is close-knit, incestuous in terms of band make-up, and fanatic. The Ukrainian NSBM band Hate Forest's website proclaims:

Hate Forest's first songs were created in the year 1995 in the Ukraine. Hate Forest's art is based upon the Aryan/Slavonic mythology, Nietzschean philosophy, and the ideology of elitism. Now Hate Forest includes four persons. Every subhuman buying Hate Forest releases buys a weapon against himself (www.supernalmusic.com/labels/supernal/hate_forest.htm, no longer available).

Ukrainian NSBMers are fond of terms like 'subhuman', which are often spurned by 'pro-white' activists in the West who seek mainstream legitimacy. Hate Forest is famously secretive, the quote above being one of the few press statements available in English, which adds to their aura and cultural capital in the international black metal scene. The equation of the terms 'Aryan' and 'Slavonic' in Hate Forest's lexicon speaks to the instability of both terms; racial and cultural terminology can be redefined at will to suit ideological purposes. Hate Forest incorporates Ukrainian folk music and traditional vocals into their music in a highly effective

way, a tactic which adds both to their nationalist credentials at home and their exotic appeal abroad. NSBM attempts to create a sense that European cultures all over the world are 'waking-up' and realizing their national/racial identity. Ukrainian NSBM asserts a distinct nationalist, pagan, racist perspective that is specific to a place and a culture, while suggesting that other European traditions could be applied to the same framework by NSBMers in their respective cultures.

The organized racist movement in the West is very keen to capitalize on the intensity, fanaticism and quality of eastern European NSBM. Erich Gliebe explained to me during our interview:

We have pretty good communication with bands from Eastern Europe. Poland, Russia, Ukraine. We have put out over here CDs or albums from Graveland, of course, Nokturnal Mortem, Aryan Terrorism, and we carry a lot of NSBM and Pagan type music from Russia... These Europeans don't have the finances to travel around the world the way that Western Europeans do. So they are a bit limited, perhaps they come from a harsher environment and they are more concerned with things on a local level (8 February 2008).

Organizations like Gliebe's National Alliance are opposed to Judaism, Christianity, and Satanism. Bands from distant European cultures and traditions espousing their pre-Christian national/cultural identity lend themselves effectively to their worldview. Eastern European NSBM provides a very specific model for identity creation, a model that can be adapted to any Euro-centric culture in the world.

Conclusion

Satanic black metalers have widely condemned NSBM, and vice versa. Although neo-Nazi strains of Satanism gained a fair amount of popularity during the 1980s, Satanic black metal has largely dismissed these trends, particularly in the post-church burning era. Satanic French black metalers Arkhon Infaustus assert:

Racism and politics are so far away from our vision of black metal. Politics is nothing but the science of man to rule over other men. And to be interested in all of that just means that you are someone locked to these natural and social society [*sic*]...and we are really different from that. We respect this kind of racism, like all these kinds of racism in the world because they breed war...they breed hate...they breed killing...they breed rape and all of that kind of thing. So, we can kind of understand this, but they are too low life of hate [*sic*] to be performed by any of ours. Your spirit is much more important than the country where you were born (Zebub, dir. 2006).

As this quote illustrates, Satanic black metalers' rejection of racism and neo-Nazism has nothing to do with notions of a universal humanity or a rejection of hate. Arkhon Infaustus dismiss racism because its hatred is too specific and exclusive. Satanic black metalers often perceive the war, death and anguish that result

from racism and Nazism as happy accidents caused by a misguided and contemptible herd mentality.

NSBM, like Nazi punk, will continue to be marginalized from the main body of black metal culture until it is a separate scene altogether. Its intolerance of Satanism, unwillingness to embrace non-European audiences and inability to do business with mainstream record labels like Nuclear Blast or Earache will continue to isolate NSBM and alienate the majority of black metal scene members. Black metal's generalized fascination with an imagined past and its hatred of modern secular culture will always lend itself to appropriation by far-right racist groups and individuals, but its inherent contradictions and incompatibility with many of black metal's most cherished ideas will prevent it from gaining widespread popularity within the scene. Whatever transgressive power National Socialism might contain is outweighed by its unavoidable connection with modernity and herd mentality in ways that are very similar to black metal's critique of Christianity. National Socialism's attempt to reconcile the individual with the group is awkward and, to the vast majority of black metalers, unsatisfying. Black metal seeks to create transgressive identities removed from both the modern world and constrictive notions of self and other. NSBM does not achieve this complex cultural and theological feat, usually falling back on tired notions of race and tradition that reassert the problematic aspects of modernity rather than reconciling them.

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