HATE COUTURE:

SUBCULTURAL FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE SERBIAN

BLACK METAL MUSIC SCENE

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

This work is an ethnography of the Serbian black metal music scene. Through ethnographic descriptions and a study of the manner in which social scientists have conceptualized youth movements and scenes in the past decades it is hoped to present a study of an international phenomenon from the perspective of a Serbian music scene. Many of the current anxieties concerning the post-socialist decline in mainstream consensus and its substitution with forms of youth culture as 'politics by other means' will be addressed.

These social scenes are a response to the demands and possibilities that contemporary modernity produces in the Balkans and within capitalist society in general. Both Serbia and the black metal scene, have in the past been represented as both 'other' and dangerous to the body politic of Europe. The disjuncture between perception and experience are explored here through techniques of ethnographic representation and embodied descriptions of the attraction and internal logics that operate both within Serbia and the wider black metal music scene.

Hospitality, scene myth-making, cathartic effervescence, masculinity and a 'volkish' performance of identity are some of the themes explored here through the medium of music and its capacity to both mirror and contest extremes of ideology and violence. This work also takes into account the 'flows' of influence and discourse that exist in scenic networks that link Scandinavian Satanic Paganism, the extreme right in Polish and Russian metal music and a receptive but deeply individualistic Serbian version of a shared scenic space. Despite the scenes' links to extremist discourses this thesis reveals insights into a (scene based) virulently patriotic Pan-Slavic identity. An identity which manages to regularly contradict and efface many of the tensions that outside observers would typically expect to exist between Serbs, Bosnians, Croatians and their surrounding neighbors, in reflexive and surprising ways.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted by me in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled "Hate Couture: Subcultural Fundamentalism and the Serbian Black Metal Music Scene" represents my own work and has not been previously submitted to this or any other institution for any degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed:…………………………………………….

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Introduction.

The Highs and Lows of a Fieldwork Learning Curve.

This thesis is an exploration of the values, experiences, ideologies and organizing principles behind the Serbian black metal music scene. Principally it is concerned with an organic but ephemeral set of meanings that are reproduced in both 'mundane' (daily life) and 'spectacular' (live music events) contexts (Kahn-Harris 2006). Throughout this thesis there is an engagement with the level of critique and reification that that the music scene engages in, particularly with regards to how people within the scene view themselves within Serbian society, as both apart of and apart from. In some of the following chapters there will be an analysis of the scene in terms of its resistance to contemporary social fragmentation and allegiances. In other chapters the scene will be understood as a microcosm that recycles aspects of volkish connectedness in a style that was formerly the preserve of wider nationalist movements. However the fact that these types of music scenes are occurring here-and-now in a historical moment when tightly bound mass social movements are in sharp decline, means that they must be understood in relation to the conditions of possibility that neoliberal economic and social markets have opened up in central and eastern Europe. So whilst this thesis does not directly address the economic underpinnings of the Serbian black metal scene, it does however take account of the human and cultural resources that are invested in the scene. Informing this thesis is the neoliberal moment in which we are living which has proved so adept at both providing an outlet/catharsis for alienation, whilst simultaneously making a virtue out of that same sense of alienation.

These 'virtues' are what are explored in this thesis, along with the various ironies inherent in trying to understand the democratization that exists within a music scene, even as it styles itself as elite and volkish. On other words, the social conditions that emerged since the nineteen nineties and the simultaneous fragmentation of music genres into sub-genres, coinciding with the fragmentation of the Balkans themselves. Just as the genres of punk and other alter-styles are understood as responses to prevailing social conditions in the nineteen seventies, Serbian black metal is here also understood in light of, as opposed to as a response to social conditions. This is done in order to avoid the fraught narrative of understanding new social movements as either resistance or containment; to widespread social change/trends. Each new social movement depends on certain raw material in order to exist and move from the local to the glocal. In Serbia (as in surrounding countries) this raw material is/was a combination of youthful enthusiasm, boredom and a proliferation of post-communist buildings and institutions. Whilst these buildings and institutions did not exactly set out to encourage the Serbian black metal scene, their very existence provided fertile ground for groups of young people to come together and create something that took shape in a manner different to countries in which social space is more or less entirely controlled by economic forces.

The specter of real, imagined, and aestheticized violence also looms large in this thesis. In the early chapters there is an exploration of the organizing principles which allowed the black metal scene to crystalize as a definable genre, based upon certain violent actions in Scandinavia in the early nineteen nineties. As the thesis progresses the understanding and relationship between violence is examined further and in context. In this regard the black metal scene is unusual in that generally 'real' violence tends to disallow the possibility of 'play' with violence (Huizinga 1955). Whereas in the black

metal scene, whilst it is not exactly a humorous genre of music, the presence of actual violence, rarely gets to the point where it is no longer funny ie. no matter how serious it gets, it does not threaten to implode the genre. In the final two chapters, the conceptual and nihilistic violence that informed an NSBM (national socialist black metal) festival in Romania, is contrasted with the actual violence that was used as performance at a festival in the Czech Republic. These also lead back to a discussion of the irresolvability of the humanist ethos of anthropology to occasionally come to terms with the Nietzschean thrust of some new social movements. This is to provide an optic whereby the reader can occasionally glimpse the conflicts and resolutions under which people within the Serbian black metal scene can operate under, but from a vantage point whereby the violence is depicted as woven into the scene and not apart from it. Therefore it is present in the main ideas presented throughout the thesis but is not treated as a resolvable academic category that can be neatly worked out. Instead it is the "obstinate other" within the overall narrative (Van De Port 1998, 1999). In some sections of this thesis the ethnographic vignettes are heavily informed by my own commitments to music scenes throughout my life, whereas in others the intention is to understand the motivations behind my interlocutors authentic commitments to the scene. It is these authentic commitments that have informed this thesis and its presentation of the back story to the Serbian black metal scene, how time place, technology and attitude had played a role in structuring the sound and aesthetic of the scene and in its continuing evolution. These are treated as the social pulls that draw together the human, economic and cultural resources that circulate within the scene. Where possible my own scenic commitment is made apparent and at no point do I wish to poke fun at or render ironic other peoples commitment to the music scene in

an Evans Pritchard style 'nod' to the reader or as a "detached ironic observer" (Rosaldo in Clifford & Marcus 1986:93).

The different chapters of this thesis also serve as kind of emotional map. Moments during the fieldwork and the write-up when levels of enthusiasm, or doubt and pessimism played their part, are occasionally reflected upon in the choice of theoretical appraisal. In this vein the potential for mild anarchic subversion that underlies the work of Johan Huizinga on the play element in culture (1955) is juxtaposed with the profound pessimism of Adorno's critique of the culture industry and the trajectory he plots in his analysis (2001, 2002).

At the beginning of the fieldwork for this thesis my research question was quite vaguely defined and theoretically speaking tended to heavily cannibalize UK subcultural studies of the seventies and their subsequent critique and reappraisal in the following decades. These sections of data, literary review and theory are merged with ethnographic vignettes based on events that took place during my fieldwork in order to both confirm and contest the manner in which similar forms of sociality have been considered and theorized in the past. The combined merits and dilemmas of the prolonged nature of this study (four years to date) of a social movement, derive from the fact that a good deal of change has taken place from beginning to end. This can be broken into several distinct phases in which meaning and interpretation becomes self-contradictory, followed by brief disillusionment and an eventual revitalization and enthusiasm for finishing the project.

In the first of these phases, given that it marked the beginning of my first 'real' (as in going somewhere exotic and meeting the 'other') anthropological fieldwork there was a buoyant sense of enthusiasm that easily overrode any sense of discipline. The attainment of a scholarship and intense curiosity I felt towards 'getting into' the Serbian black metal

scene provided a heady intoxication and a sense of confidence and certainty. This meant that the many entreaties calling for a clarification of what I was studying tended to fall on deaf ears as I found myself immersed in an exhilarating, all encompassing fieldwork which for better or worse tended to drown out all other considerations. Meeting people, questioning, debating, arguing, making mistakes and disappearing into the music and social scene meant that I deliberately left unquestioned and uncoordinated the various strands of data that I was hastily collecting, and clumsily forging into a document. There was also a sense of novelty and shock-factor accorded to research which highlighted the more spectacular elements of Satanism, Paganism, neo-nationalism and their proximity to Serbia's violent legacy.

A second distinct phase which marked a progression in terms of ideas and a sense of what was being undertaken occurred at the end of my second period of fieldwork. At that point in time the 'strange' was becoming familiar and as such; a lot more difficult to document as time seemed to stand still during what should have been a midpoint in the project. Having so immersed myself in a social life in Serbia, my social and personal life back in Ireland became increasingly difficult to maintain or even enjoy. Spending so much time wallowing in a moral relativism that I believed was necessary in order to understand the aesthetic of black metal; meant that I underwent noticeable personality changes. Long term relationships in Ireland fell apart. The tolerances sustaining old friendships were pushed to breaking point as I allowed the 'tolerance of intolerance' that I had absorbed from the black metal scene to pervade my interactions with friends who needed support which was not forthcoming. Many of the old clichés about anthropological fieldwork that I had read about as an undergraduate began to feel very real as I identified more and more

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with my life in Serbia rather than my old life in Ireland. This segued into a period of stasis as a search for distractions created a stagnation of enthusiasm in terms of trying to marry my data to a set of coherent anthropological understandings. In response to this brief waning in enthusiasm various theoretical approaches were undertaken that allowed the thesis to encompass approaches to music based ethnography that have to some degree been overlooked. Particularly so in terms of trying to find alternative ways to understand quasi-political occurrences that I had documented early on during the research but did not have a frame of reference within which to situate them. A recurring theme throughout the thesis involves trying to make sense of potentially nihilistic/fascistic/misanthropic statements and utterances, in light of the close knit and humanly warm sociality of the scene in general.

The chapters which draw heavily on Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1955) (chapter 2) and Sontag's essay *Against Interpretation* (1990) chapter six) both represent theoretical engagements with events which had for a long time proved difficult to write about in a manner that went further than mere description. Huizinga's thesis; that play is the underlying principle in (as opposed to of) human culture has allowed sections of this thesis to invoke the spirit of older genres of anthropological enquiry. This spirit is one in which the 'other' and the 'exotic' are in this account, rendered conspicuously present. The intention here is partly ironic and partly mischievous, but also has taken into account the wishes of informants, interlocutors and friends who would prefer not to see an erosion of the mystique that surrounds the Serbian black metal scene. Huizinga, along with Adorno, Orwell and others, characterized and lent descriptive substance to the forces responsible for what they perceived to be the death of the 'play' element in culture (industry, capitalism, governmentalism). However in turning aspects of 'play' theory towards the

activities within the Serbian black metal scene, this thesis maintains that the play element is alive and well but functions at the micro as opposed to the macro level of human culture.

The aforementioned ideas heralded the third and current phase in which a period of removal from the sensual all-encompassing aspects of fieldwork have provided a renewed vigor and revived sense of curiosity towards the project. Now it is possible to understand with an increasing degree of clarity, how to describe and impose order on the past few years. This has allowed for an appreciation of the experiences afforded to me; both from my Serbian interlocutors and my supervisor and staff at NUI Maynooth. Finally the seemingly disparate strands and themes that I attempted to document over the past few years are slowly taking shape under several distinct headings. These following chapters humbly seek to organize the chaos of experience into a coherent document that shall to attend to both anthropological concerns and a duty of ethical representation towards my sources.

Morphology of Inquiry: The Dilemma of Chapter Order, Chronology and Theme.

Having divided the fieldwork into three distinct phases (of three to four months at a time) between 2006 and 2008, with subsequent visits for significant events and reunions, the data generated eventually morphed into several distinct themes. Inspired by Tsing's (1993) honest disdain of chronology in her ethnography, ' *Realm of the Diamond Queen'*, I decided to eschew a strictly chronological narrative in favor of a focus on particular themes as the chapters of this thesis took shape. True, the use of classic ethnographic devices are used, such as 'insertion scenes'. In fact several of them, but they

have been constructed with the benefit of hindsight, which has allowed for reappraisals of situations in light of later experiences.

Throughout this thesis there is also an ongoing reformulation of the original research questions, which means that again and again throughout, there are attempts to theorize, understand, clarify, explain and even essentialize the wider black metal scene. With the scene having existed for close to two decades at this point [2011] there is a sense of a subcultural version of contemporary myth creation (non-academic historicism) informing this narrative. Although perhaps contemporary scenic mythicism, or an attempt to understand the creation of scenic myths/histories would be a more concise phrasing. Therefore the zeitgeist of specific moments in the continuing evolution of black metal are analyzed repeatedly in accordance with my accumulation of scenic understanding. The fact that the bulk of this 'understanding' developed during my time in Serbia, lends this project a quasi-multi-sited dimension. With the Serbian scene acting as the main testing ground, in terms of trying to make sense of the black metal scene as a socially organized(ing) matrix with an international composition. Repeatedly throughout the following chapters, the organizing principles that inform the black metal scene are described in terms of scenic discourse, and then this discourse is further scrutinized using theory and ethnographic description.

The chapter entitled 'Hate Couture' is based on the earliest phase of writing in which the 'brush clearing' work took place. In 2006 most of the source material relating to black metal music derived from popular media as opposed to scholarly sources. In a sense this was where the fieldwork began as scene related meanings and discourse became clearer, it was possible to move from interested outsider to participant stakeholder status.

In becoming a fan and consumer of black metal, through attendance at concerts and eventually sharing living spaces with musicians in Serbia a kind of ordering- of-the-senses took place. From this point it became possible to perceive some of the reasons as to why externally problematic phenomenon so easily made sense within the scene. This lead to a consideration of the means through which the 'genre-ing' of black metal took place in the past and an exploration of the conditions of possibility for present and future. This aspect of the scene is explored in detail in chapter five which documents the face to face forms of 'genre leaking' (Bauman & Briggs 1992) that brought radical and fascistic elements into the eastern European black metal scene.

In the 'Hate Couture' chapter the main research question posed was, what is it that is so 'Serbian' about the Serbian black metal music scene? This initially superficial question gradually morphed into a broader preoccupation with the manner in which the everyday sociality of the scene hinges around a matrix of connections external to the Serbian scene. On a number of levels the phenomena being reproduced in black metal hark to an ephemeral anxiety underscoring a popular belief that there is something dangerous 'at the heart of Europe'. This moral anxiety is toyed with in the writing of this thesis as the sentiments underscoring the phrase 'at the heart of Europe' echo over and over again throughout the document. This implicitly brings to mind a concern with morality, issuing from the mouths of politicians, media, and within disparate movements and scenes. The underlying context of this concern is rooted in the idea of Europe itself as it moves into a phase during which a breakdown in consensus and a contest for meaning seeks articulation as the socio-economic structures which underpin the EU program appear to be faltering.

In trying to define the wider black metal scene based on my experiences in Serbia and the surrounding countries several distinct tropes have emerged. Firstly, in the chapter from which this thesis gets its name, I provide an overview and a brief appraisal of the origins of the black metal scene as it emerged in Scandinavia. The emergence of this scene and the violent events which occurred in the early nineties could perhaps be treated as the beginning of a particular episteme. This episteme is a moment that both preempted and occurred spontaneously as a result of the massive proliferation and quasi-democratization of music and identity-projects that internet communication facilitated. This early nineteen nineties black metal music scene thrived in an environment that increasingly made use of independent recording techniques. The Hate Couture chapter demonstrates the degree to which the scene was both shaped and shapes itself and successive generations based on the precursors to what we now know as 'file-sharing'. These previous networks that were perhaps slower but deeply connected, resulted in an elaborate and organic global circulation of music in the form of tape trading and 'pen friend' type networks. These were the precursors of the 'flat world' phenomenon described by Friedman (2006). Whereby the barriers to trade, interaction and communication are 'flattened' through the use of instantaneous communication which the internet allows. Friedman concentrates on outsourcing, telephone and commerce and the decline of pyramidal business management structures but the same ideas also hold for social networks and music scenes. These networks have mushroomed in the past decade as the institutional barriers restricting the flows of music, text, art and commerce were effectively flattened and undermined by consumers, as opposed to producers and distributors. In many instances the pen-pal and tape trading networks that proliferated during the nineteen eighties and nineties can be understood as the physical manifestation

of the types of relationships that eventually became cyber; through the use of websites such as 'myspace', 'facebook' and 'twitter'. These tensions between the collapse of hegemonic systems of affiliation as found under socialism and the uncertainty ushered in by free-market neoliberal ideals are an underlying theme throughout this thesis. Yet they are also issues that can't be neatly resolved or explained away. They exist as a push factor that make 'extreme' scenes appear seductive in their FTW (Fuck The World) resistance/rejection of real and imagined social values. Yet without the freedom that came about through the substitution of pyramidal hierarchies with interacting networks, these scenes would have been much more local rather than glocal, more like gangs and less like movements.

Therefore the 'Hate Couture' chapter is an attempt to draw together the main literature and commentaries on the development of the black metal scene with the intention of providing a basis from which to understand the internal logics under which the scene appears to operate. A good deal of attention is paid to Moynihan and Soderlind's book, "*Lords of Chaos* " (2003) which documents the beginnings of the Bergen black metal scene. This is one of the most compelling, if slightly biased, accounts of the manner in which the escalation of violent behavior which resulted in church arsons, murder and suicide, have formed a basic template on which the black metal scene was built. Although this chapter is admittedly ponderous in parts, this extended overview of the background is necessary in order to understand the level of prestige which eventually inhered towards the black metal scene. Many of these events have formed genre defining templates that set limits to and police the kinds of discourse that circulates within the black metal scene to this day. This issue of prestige based on a real and imagined proximity to these forms looms large throughout the thesis but is explored strictly through the headings of scene,

and aesthetics, as opposed to the genre of post-conflict and trauma. These themes also provide a basis for understanding the mythologisation of the scene. It is this myth-creating capacity of the scene, which fuels the anticipation and effervescence that is discussed in the chapters titled 'At the Heart of Europe', and 'The Gift and Collective Effervescence'.

In addressing the politically problematic aspects of the scene's involvement with extreme right-wing political ideas (as opposed to actual grass roots political movements), the phrase 'at the heart of Europe' again hovers at the edge of consciousness. This comes about rather implicitly, as a consideration of the events that took place in stable, affluent, middle-class Scandinavia, led to an initial research question that is first proposed in the 'Hate Couture' chapter. Namely, if a music scene which places such a strong emphasis on blood, soil and mythology, and an attitude of religious warfare as everyday scenic practice, can occur in Scandinavia with such dramatic results;
How has this scene manifested in one of the last European countries to actually engage in 'real' religious warfare?

In the chapter entitled 'Moral Games and Neo-tribal History'; the concept of a sense of history and mythology within the wider black metal scene is explored. This draws upon Foucault's (2004) interest in what he describes as a moment in the late nineteenth century when populations under monarchic dynasties experienced a period of racial awareness (not racist awareness) in antipathy to the ruling (and culturally speaking) foreign elites. In a sense Foucault was exploring the potential of race as a form of collective self-identification, later theorized and refined under the heading of 'bio-power' used in order to subvert and form a counter-history of the masses, as opposed to the historicism of the elite which seeks to amplify the 'dazzling effect of power' (2004:70).

On a number of levels the volkish aspects of the black metal scene bear an uncanny resemblance to romantic nationalist movements in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Ideas of collective pride, shame and betrayal by elites have found a new resonance in central and eastern Europe at the same time as a decline in traditional mass politics. Therefore these new social movements suit 'clicktivism' (a phrase coined which sought to downplay the net based significance of the recent student protests in England) and the forms of disaffection which are not always intended for a face to face audience. The iconography of black metal draws heavily on the Pagan aspects of German National Socialism, but for the most part these are used in a reflexively non-political manner. This was something that took a while to understand and re-articulate from a research perspective as most commentators dealing with these topics tend to speak in rather absolute terms. This meant that it took a number of decades before the performative aspects of extreme political expressions began to filter through in subcultural studies (Kahn-Harris et al). Having thoroughly mined British cultural studies post nineteen seventies to present, it was a surprise to find a set of coherent and highly applicable theories in Huizinga's almost seventy year old thesis " *Homo Ludens*" (1955). These theories easily suited the reappraisals that need to be undertaken of ethnographic data as this thesis progressed and have helped make sense of previously enigmatic statements and actions by friends and interlocutors.

The 'Moral Games' chapter describes my first meeting with Veljko, the former vocalist with the band Wolfs Hunger. This meeting is discussed from a number of stand-points; firstly it was underscored by a welcoming but interrogatory style of hospitality. Secondly, it involved a discussion of ideologies and politics, that were negotiated through scene specific articulations of (sub)cultural capitol and habitus. Thirdly, this is where I use

the work of Huizinga (1955), on 'play', to arrive at a few varied sets of meanings in order to understand what took place throughout the encounter. In seeking to further explain both the use of, and conceptualization of ideology in the black metal scene, Huizinga's work on 'play' (1955), is also referred to throughout the latter half of the thesis as a means to understand the main threads that connect the various chapters. That is to say, the problem of relating theory and practice, discourse and activity and utterance and interaction as a means to construct an ethnography of the overall black metal scene from a Serbian vantage-point. Huizinga's concept of 'play' in culture is further utilized in the 'Moral Games' chapter in order to shed light on the forms of macro-patriotism that permeate the scene, but should with careful analysis, not be used to define the scene. Again the overall rubric of trying to discern wider meanings informing the black metal genre are elaborated upon by exploring the concept of sub-genre and it's inherent distinctions.

In the chapter entitled 'Bedroom Culture and the Joys of Hatred' the role of the internet in maintaining a sense of mutuality in the scene will be discussed. The theory informing this section derives in part from the critique of the CCCS and British subcultural studies. Within these critiques, in part based on the work of Angela Mc Robbie on feminism and youth culture (1991), the deficiencies of the male centered focus of the CCCS has operationalized new domains of inquiry. The concept of 'bedroom culture' as outlined by Lincoln (1991) is adopted in this chapter in a move away from the role it plays in young women's lives, to an examination of the role it plays in terms of privacy. It is argued here that these conditions were vital in the production and consumption of increasingly 'extreme' forms of music and the conditions of possibility that allowed young people to consume styles of music hidden (in plain sight) from the

gaze of parents. It will also be argued in the Bedroom Culture chapter, that idea of the bedroom as a delineated youth zone/space has given rise to an increased sense of youth autonomy and allowed for an increased amount of time dedicated to personal identity projects. This is an offshoot of the 'flat world' phenomenon described by Freidman, except in the case of subcultures, it has meant a modest flattening of the hierarchies entailed in face to face street based scenes. Black metal capitalizes on this very successfully due to it's aesthetic embrace of misanthropy, which allows music and artistic projects conceived entirely in bedroom spaces to inhere 'kvlt' status without the need for live performances. The Norwegian projects/bands Burzum, and Darkthrone are two of the best known examples of musicians achieving widespread fame without having built up a live fan base. A similar project/band named Goat Ritual from Banja Luka in Republika Srpska have also been promoted by members of The Stone/May Result. These all serve as cogent examples of the move away from the consumption of record industry produced and distributed music, to the production of music that was increasingly defined by the possibilities of interacting within the influences and constraints of the genre. Therefore rather than executives in a boardroom dictating a sound and aesthetic, the bands themselves drew influences from their peers and had the freedom to produce music that would circulate, regardless of being ignored in mainstream outlets.

The corresponding increases in notions of personal space and privacy during the nineteen nineties have also facilitated many changes with regards to the 'extremity' of music based discourses over the past two decades. From the advent of personal music players and ear phones to the widespread use of the internet, musicians and others working in small independent/interacting networks have managed to bypass the kinds of state and institutional censorship that threatened transgressive music during the nineteen

eighties. Based on research into censorship, zoning and conditions of possibility brought about by 'flat world' interacting networks (Friedman 2006), the 'Bedroom Culture' chapter also examines the art and material culture of the black metal scene. This examination of art and aesthetics leads to a discussion of the manner in which an 'escalation theory' is appropriate for an understanding of the black metal scene as it exists today.

The 'world within a world' aspect of Serbian black metal and the (sub)cultural capital associated with the deployment of knowledge, collecting and secular archiving within the scene will also be discussed. The final sections of this chapter discuss the concept of 'Yugo' nostalgia, the discourses surrounding 'turbofolk' and the manner in which black metal is both alterior to these scenes yet responsive towards them.

In the chapter entitled 'Gender, Male Bonding and Sociality' the lessons learned from the early fieldwork phases are reconciled with sets of meanings which explain the logic underscoring theory and practice. Having outlined the 'extremity' of the misanthropic discourses produced in the 'Hate Couture' chapter, the preceding analysis of gender, masculinity and sociality will shed light on the attraction which the black metal scene offers to many of it's adherents. In addition to some subcultures being understood simply as a form of 'politics by other means', they may also be understood as a form of secret or exclusive society that is not dissimilar to Masonic and occult fraternities of the late nineteenth century. In short many of these types of music scenes are based on a structural commonality. Basically these scenes function in a manner not dissimilar to golf clubs or Masonic lodges for a section of people for whom those forms of networking are either inaccessible or hold very little appeal, again the 'play' element of culture is at the

margins of this discourse. The male bonding and Bacchanalian ethos that is played out by some members of the Serbian scene provides an insight into the hyper-masculine gender roles that simultaneously contest and reflect expected norms.

The chapter on gender also indirectly addresses the post-socialist breakdown in consensus, as Aristotle's maxim not-withstanding, 'man', and more specifically 'young men' are becoming increasingly less, 'political animals'. Contemporary popular music often tends to avoid overtly political issues, and the relatively high standards of living (in western Europe) over the past two decades have also meant that the desire for social change, protest and alter-politics was not always a pressing concern for musicians. Even the politically charged genre of punk music has of late tended to recycle the sound and sentiments of seventies and eighties bands, as opposed to finding a voice of it's own that can tap into a contemporary political zeitgeist. Where punk has undergone an evolution in terms of genre has been through the channeling of the 'anger-sound' structure of punk, into the self-absorbed narcissism of the emo (emotional) music genre. It is this potential for catharsis which has allowed a basic punk sound structure to evolve over the past two decades. This similar capacity within black metal music is also discussed throughout the chapter on gender.

The final two chapters respectively entitled 'At the Heart of Europe' and 'The Gift and Collective Effervescence' are lighter on theory, instead they focus heavily on ethnographic description and the embodied experience of participating in a music scene. In the 'Heart of Europe' chapter the sense of expectation, and the questing/pilgrimage aspect of traveling to a music festival is discussed. The festival described in this chapter is Frey Faxi Fest, a Pagan/national socialist black metal festival that took place in Sibiu in

central Transylvania, during a week when the city was celebrating its status as the 'European Capital of Culture'. The irony of a highly secretive fascist music festival, taking place in the midst of a multi-cultural celebration of European identity led to some of the questions raised in this chapter, especially concerning the manner in which the EU is inscribed on the land and social scapes of various countries. The genres of travel writing and the expectation of EU facilitated homogeneity are also addressed as part of the description of the journey from Budapest to Sibiu.

Some lessons, observation and contrasts to the Serbian black metal scene are also discussed in the 'Heart of Europe' chapter. These are partially informed by a focus on the ethics of representation, as at this later stage in the research it became more difficult to discuss some of the events and experiences that happened in Serbia. These difficult themes and incidents are not ignored or glossed over, but rather approached in a manner that treats themes in black metal, as opposed to ethnographic incidents in Serbia. At this stage of research and subsequent writing, there was a need to represent my interlocutors in a manner that preserved their privacy and safety. Therefore, in seeking to pursue the subject of black metal in its various manifestations this chapter explores some of the more problematic and politically contentious aspects of the scene. In particular, Serbia's scene/geographic location, which has strong connections to the sound and style of the Scandinavian black metal scene, but also to the quasi-political extremism of the Russian and Polish black/Pagan metal scene. Some of the conclusions reached in the Heart of Europe' chapter add another layer of understanding to a common thread running throughout this thesis; what is it that attracts people to the black metal scene?

In the chapter entitled 'The Gift and Collective Effervescence' I describe a music event that I attended soon after Frey Faxi Fest. This chapter introduces Sontag's (1990)

'*Against Interpretation*' essay and treats it as schismatic manifesto which encourages an embodied and deeply felt interaction with music as/and art. Although it is perhaps slightly self defeating to call for less interpretation, whilst simultaneously 'interpreting' a music scene, the intention here is directed at the site of interaction, as opposed to the analytical post-mortem. This chapter features vivid, sensual and perhaps disturbing descriptions (depending on the reader's reaction to bloodshed as cathartic entertainment!) of a black metal festival which were utterly compelling to witness. The use of Sontag in this context is to treat this section of ethnography in as voyeuristic a manner as possible, in the same way that works of art can also be enjoyed in a sensual and compulsive manner. The 'Gift and Collective Effervescence' chapter also returns to the theme of genre that has been evoked throughout the thesis, and the conditions of possibility afforded by a contrasting description of live performances by The Stone and another band named Shining. Both of these performances were utterly compelling examples of successful live black metal, but each for different reasons. These reasons shall be explored through the themes of blood-letting, collective effervescence and the nature of the link between performer and audience

Finally the thesis shall conclude with a consideration of the research undertaken, the lessons learned and whether or not it has led to a deeper understanding of the black metal phenomenon it so doggedly sought to analyze.

Chapter 1.

Hate Couture: Subcultural Fundamentalism Within Extreme Music Scenes .

Extremism, fundamentalism, and 'cultures of violence' are all terms that have accrued a good deal of currency over the past few years. In most cases they are applied in contexts bereft of careful consideration as to what the terms actually mean, and how that meaning is performed, if at all, within social contexts.

A rather old Collins dictionary that sits on my desk describes fundamentalism as a "belief in the literal truth of the bible" (1981:213). This old and by now quite out of date definition is a useful starting point from which to explore the types of fundamentalism that occur in contexts outside of religion, as it shows how far the term has become detached from it's original context. In popular usage the term fundamentalism is associated with any fervently, passionately held beliefs, views, and even activities that could be considered habits, practices and customs, the areas in the past which were generally referred to as 'culture' by anthropologists. For example it is no longer unusual to hear the term culture be used in such a way that announces an ownership of practices and ideas. This is most apparent in contexts ranging from Niezen's anthropological account of the origins of the indigenous people's movement (2003), to English soccer hooligans explaining to journalists that the reason they like to cause a bit of chaos and violence at football matches is because 'it is part of their culture'. Therefore it is possible to see peoples' collective attachment to something called 'their culture' as a secularization of fundamentalism wherein culture assumes the (albeit) flexible status of a literal truth. In this case the 'truth' represents a source of authority, justification and a select privilege available only to a definable group. This is apparent in the more obvious cases just mentioned, but it is also equally discernible in subtle contexts such as the attachment that people feel towards various subcultures, particularly the ones in which genre allegiance is privileged over stylistic/subcultural promiscuity (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004:11).

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Selective Fundamentalism.

As with many contemporary religions, most people pick and choose texts, beliefs and practices that fit comfortably into their lives and discard the awkward, archaic aspects, such as stoning women to death for adultery or not eating meat on Fridays. Within so called 'extreme' music scenes, in order to be faithful ('kvlt', 'true', 'tr00' in black metal), and belong to a genre or scene, fans, musicians and scene members embark on what could be described as a career path (Berger 1999) . The career path of a music fan or musician involves drawing selectively from available material, responding to influences and in turn contributing to and influencing others. This could take place within their own peer group or as part of a productive movement/scene, creating sounds, texts, ideology, artifacts and attitudes. If this seems a trifle removed from the harsh and ideologically brittle version of religious fundamentalism in which there exists absolute truths. Imagine arguing to a black metal fan the proposal that the band Cradle of Filth (who are now more commonly associated with romantic (teenage) gothic/dark wave music), are more 'black metal' or 'kvlt' than the band Mayhem, who are considered to be absolutely emblematic of everything the scene represents, in terms of sound, ideology and action. Mayhem also hold the dubious but scenically important 'honor' of having had members involved in suicide, murders and church arson. This serves to highlight a real-life commitment to a misanthropic aesthetic that many other black and death metal bands simply sing about.

Or to further complicate the issue (in a disrupt-the-chronology-note-to-self), as I put the finishing touches to this thesis, I have become more aware of the myriad of ideologically extreme sub-genres. The reputation of Mayhem that made such a strong

impression upon me in 2006, pales in comparison to the discourses associated with of some of the Russian and Polish national socialist black metal bands. In fact, between 2006 and 2010 the status of some of the older black metal bands has been eroded by their increase in popularity and exposure to mainstream media. Ultra-nationalist Pagan Front associated bands from central and eastern Europe have caused something of an ideological split within the black metal scenes in Western Europe, where politics is seen to cheapen the genre.

To return to the salient point of this section, as with the majority of mainstream religious movements, some music scenes demand more from their members than others. This is particularly so within the black metal scene, which is for many adherents an all encompassing lifestyle which seems (to date) to be extending well past adolescence. On my last trip to Serbia I met members of a father and son black metal band, the father was in his mid forties and a fan of black metal since the mid nineties.

The main source of information relating to the genre-ing of black metal, its history and development is Moynihan and Soderlind's (2003) account of the scene in Norway during the early nineteen nineties. This is one of the most important sources of information about the scene. It serves as a detailed but highly partial case study which sheds light on what seem to be the dominant ethos and genre defining ideologies that inform the wider European black metal scene.

The First Wave.

The so-called 'first wave of black metal' emerged during the early 1980s when heavy metal bands such as Venom and Merciful Fate began using overtly Satanic imagery

and lyrics in their music, artwork and performances. The use of this sound and sentiment in music was by no means completely new, as bands such as Coven and Black Widow had used Satanic rituals and iconography in their music during the late sixties and early seventies. However the proto-black metal bands of the eighties and nineties brought this kind of Satanic music to a much wider audience and emerged as genre defining acts. This meant that Satanism in music was no longer a marginal, underground/hidden subculture but something which had entered the musical canon in a way that has continued to influence musicians to this day. The popularity of these bands spawned a whole generation of acts which expanded upon the Satanic theme to a degree that meant it was highly unlikely to fade back into obscurity, as happened with older bands such as Coven and Black Widow did (although they are currently enjoying a resurgence through downloading).

Through the enduring appeal of the music of Venom, Merciful Fate, and others such as Bathory and Slayer, the continuing popularity of these bands, means that there is an ongoing form of access to a 'repertoire of knowledge'. Successive generations over the past thirty years are able to draw upon what has become a legacy of sound and aesthetics. Which as Foucault has stated is a source/basis for forms of power and control over behavior (2004:132). This is the idea of 'qualitative knowledge' whereby a subject is known and accessible in a classificatory manner, but it is also 'knowledge from knowledge' of the 'circular' kind, a type of self confirming logic that increases a sense of certainty and authority through repetition (Foucault 2004:130).

> When the king consulted *greiffiers* and jurisconsults about his rights, what answer could he obtain, if not a knowledge established from the point of view of the judges and prosecutors he himself had created? The king therefore quite naturally finds that it contains eulogies to his own power. (Foucault 2004:130)

Or, to put it another way if reality is increasingly defined and redefined in a particular way, it may become a structuring narrative. The types of knowledge which flow outward the ruler (the source) seek only to illuminate this source and mold others in an image subservient to this source. The same is also true of music styles which exist and propagate a particular genre. The genre itself is the course which seeks to illumine itself and to stray too far from the genre is to be outside, in exile from the genre.

There is a lively mythology describing Rock n' Roll musicians taking an interest in and reputedly making pacts with the devil. Early versions of this myth can be traced back to nineteen thirties blues musician Robert Johnson reputedly making a pact with the devil at a crossroads, selling his soul in exchange for material success and skill (Baddeley 2006:95). This is a recurring theme in some of Johnson's songs, particularly *Hellhound on My Tail*. Many of Johnson's songs also mention Voodoo and Juju, and as former Misfits vocalist Glenn Danzig pointed out in an interview with Baddeley, "a lot of old blues songs are heavily rooted in occultism", "all the Voodoo and Juju stuff – *Got my Mojo Workin*, *Black Cat Bones*, *Crossroads*, *Hellhound on My Trail*" (in Baddeley 2006:95).

New versions of this myth seem to crop up over and over again through each subsequent decade and Led Zepplin, The Rolling Stones and to a lesser degree even the Beatles had their occult and esoteric phases at various stages of their careers (http://www.doktorsnake.com/voodoo/robert_johnson_crossroads.html accessed on 28/05/06). In each version of this myth, there was a blues/Voodoo/African American origin for the sound and aesthetic of the bands music, but as the bands grew in stature they tended to downplay the occult significance of their music. However the first wave of

black metal bands to use Satanism were drawing on slightly different sources, whereby Satanism was used to forge an initial split or rupture against older rock sound structures but gradually the ethos shifted towards European pre-Christian sources as lyrical themes. In a sense some of the bands, especially Bathory simply outgrew a superficial theatrical Satanism and replaced this with a more deeply considered fusion of heavy metal music and a European; blood, soil and mythology aesthetic.

The earliest wave of black metal bands in the 1980s were the first to overtly embrace Satanism from an artistic point of view, whereby Satan was not an entity to be feared for cheating you out of your soul, but was adopted in a, part shock tactic, part philosophical manner. This differed from the fear-of-dark-forces approach, that informed seventies band, Black Sabbath, who some commentators would situate within a 'family tree', origins-of-black metal type lineage (Dunne in the 2005 film, *Metal a Headbangers Journey*). Although the doom laden, bass driven sound structure of Black Sabbath's music is undoubtedly a huge influence in black metal, their ideology/aesthetic is generally regarded as too rooted in Christian cosmology and too fearful of dark forces. For example the band wore crucifixes in the upright position as opposed to the inverted crucifixes that overtly Satanic bands used. The occultism of Black Sabbath is more akin to the worldview informing the novels of Dennis Wheatley and Hammer Horror films. Although these novels and films celebrate the mystique and aura of the occult, the hero figure around which the plots are centered; though knowledgeable of the occult, always cites the bible or white magick as a cure for the evil within the plot (ie. the novel and film, *The Devil Rides Out*). Therefore a shift from the fear-of-dark-forces; simple exoticism of the earlier rock bands to an encompassing pro-Satanic lifestyle of the first wave of black metal bands is similar to the shift in tone that took place in cinema also.

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One of the first films to signify a move from a Christian oriented cosmology in which the power of Christ is the ultimate savior, to films with an overtly Satanic dialectic, was the film *Rosemary's Baby*. Although the main protagonists in *Rosemary's Baby* are 'fighting dark forces' they are ultimately defeated as the film concludes with a Satanic ceremony presided over by the actual head of the American Church of Satan, Anton La Vey. The final scene in the film is often perceived by audiences and critics to be both haunting and nihilistic, however given that Polanski moved in the same social circles and was possibly a member of The Church of Satan, Satanists could describe the film as having a 'happy ending'.

The sound structure used by the band Black Sabbath also owes a debt to delta blues and black American rock music which is another aspect that sets them apart from the later black metal bands that use arrangements that are often closer to the sound structures of European classic music. There is also a strong keyboard and electronic component to later black metal in which densely layered sound scapes are created, as opposed to the traditional chorus-rhythm-verse structure of typical blues/rock and some heavy metal. For a more nuanced understanding of the sound structures of heavy metal, Harris Berger's work provides a phenomenological account of metal, rock and jazz, which fuses expert music theory with ethnographic description (Berger 1999).

Nascent Atavism.

A small but active music scene in Bergen, Norway instigated what is known as the second wave of black metal. They began by expanding on elements of La Veyan Satanism (derived from the Church of Satan in America) in American and European heavy metal music, taking what was once an aesthetic stance and acting it out literally. Ideas of

landscape, religious space and mythic identity congealed in a particularly potent form in Norway. A campaign of church arson and other ideologically motivated forms of violence (known within the scene as 'actions', usually individual or loosely coordinated arson attacks on churches and graveyards that are not directly instigated by bands but rarely if ever condemned by them) transformed what was initially a sub-genre of heavy metal into an almost global underground phenomenon. This was partly due to the subsequent media attention and rebel prestige that followed the 'actions' but also the fact that black metal fulfilled a perceived need for extreme forms of rebellion through the performance of deviant stereotypes in youth music (Jones 2003). In a thesis entitled " *A Blaze in the Northern Sky: Black Metal Music and Subculture*", Karl Jones (2003) explains what he perceived; as a need amongst members of some subcultures to live up to and perform so called 'deviant identities'. This is not unlike Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols use of virtually all - but especially negative publicity - as a means of achieving promotion and prestige. Given that within many lifestyle oriented subcultures there exists this 'fundamentalism' which accepts and promotes almost any action that contributes to the prestige of the subculture, members will often play up to negative stereotypes rather than attempt to negate them. The following section deals with this phenomenon in greater detail by describing the crossover from a misanthropic sound to misanthropic actions which propelled the nascent second wave of black metal into global prominence.

Ubils: Crossing the Line between Theory/Aesthetics, and Action.

"Ubils" is a Gothic term meaning "going beyond the due measure" (Goodrick-Clarke 2003:218).

There had previously been plenty of metal bands willing to sing about violence and murder but until Norwegian black metal came into being, few if any bands actually crossed the line and made their violent themes a reality. In what was partially a shock tactic and also a quasi-political stance, Christianity was depicted by members of Norway's black metal scene as a foreign corrupting influence. The 'turn-the-other-cheek, love thy neighbor and pray on your knees' ethos of Christianity was blamed by many black metallers for destroying the older Norse religion and making the people weak and subservient. In this ironic act of improvisational romantic myth-creation, a 'sleight of hand' re-working of anti-colonial theory takes place. In this reworking of anti-colonial narrative Christianity is cast as the aggressor/oppressor which colonized, and stripped a 'once noble people and culture' of their ancient and just way of life. Over the past decade as the black metal genre moved through several distinct phases and an increasing amount of interviews, albums, documentaries etc. are produced; the discourse has become more complex and refined into a matrix of distinct but overlapping ideologies.

The narratives that trace christianity-as-colonial-aggressor are by no means straightforward. The sense in which these discourses are conveyed in the black metal scene is not through anything that approaches an academic interpretation of texts on witchcraft and demonology in Europe, as in Murrey (1921) and Sommers (1927, 1937, 1946). Instead it is intuited through a variety of influences in an un-rigorous manner that uses the most spectacular elements which suit the sound and aesthetic of black metal. On my first visit to Serbia I asked Marko of Grom records if he practices any Satanic or Pagan rituals. He laughed and said "fuck no, I don't dress up like some hippy, that is not the way". Later that year when trying to explore some of the influences for the mythic/occult elements of Serbian black metal I was referred to *Велесова книга, The*

Book of Veles (Pesic ND), a historical (alleged) forgery which is supposed to detail the religious beliefs of early Slav peoples. When discussing the book with Kozeljnik from The Stone/May Result, he said that "we don't take things straight from the book for our music, but the book contains ideas which are powerful and are an influence". In subsequent discussion of occult literature and Satanism this was often a theme that Kozeljnik elaborated on, an intuited rather than literal adaptation of occult ideas. He would often state that "no book contains all of a truth, you must always read between the lines to find your own meaning".

The most potent manifestation of the anti-christian identification-of-a-colonial oppressor-narrative, and perhaps the original 'founding myth' or 'action' for black metal music was the razing to the ground of the thousand-year-old Fantoft stave church. This was a Norwegian national treasure and one of the few surviving examples of this particular type of church in existence. The destruction of the church instantly propelled an otherwise marginal sub-genre of heavy metal into an intense media spotlight. The interviews and quotes given by the young musicians in the scene at the time took on the status of genre forming ideology. It was the interpretation and perception of this ideology while for at least half of the nineteen nineties; set limits upon and defined the structure that black metal initially took.

Musically the sound structure of black metal became more diverse as the nineties progressed, ranging from what was described as 'primitive, raw or brutal black metal' by Mayhem and Darkthrone to 'epic, symphonic and almost operatic black metal by bands such as Emperor and Dimmu Borgir. Black leather and band (which occasionally became banned) t-shirts became the black metal uniform. On stage and on promotional material, personal identity was subsumed by stage persona, and stage names such as Faust,

Euronymous, Fenriz and Dead were adopted by black metal musicians. These pseudonyms were borrowed from mythic/historic sources such as Norse epic poetry, the epic of Gilgamesh, and also more recent(ly) unearthed sources such as the Necronomicon and Tolkein's Lord of the Rings (2005). Unlike older rock pseudonyms such as Ziggy Stardust or Alice Cooper, the actions, pronouncements and performance of the person and the stage persona became increasingly indistinct from each other. Although not unique to the black metal scene, this is what is meant by the concept of subcultural fundamentalism; the practice of living almost completely within the scene identity, as had happened previously with movements such as Rastafarianism, the beat movement and anarcho punk scenes. The etymology of the term 'fundamentalist' is revealing in this regard as it was first used to name a movement among Protestants who produced a series of books called "*The Fundamentals*" listing qualities that defined true believers (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=fundamentalist accessed on 25/02/2011).

> Fundamentalism is a protest against that rationalistic interpretation of Christianity which seeks to discredit supernaturalism. This rationalism, when full grown, scorns the miracles of the Old Testament, sets aside the virgin birth of our Lord as a thing unbelievable, laughs at the credulity of those who accept many of the New Testament miracles, reduces the resurrection of our Lord to the fact that death did not end his existence, and sweeps away the promises of his second coming as an idle dream. It matters not by what name these modernists are known. The simple fact is that, in robbing Christianity of its supernatural content, they are undermining the very foundations of our holy religion. They boast that they are strengthening the foundations and making Christianity more rational and more acceptable to thoughtful people. Christianity is rooted and grounded in supernaturalism, and when robbed of supernaturalism it ceases to be a religion and becomes an exalted system of ethics. [Laws, "Herald & Presbyter," July 19, 1922]

This means that in cases where a person's habitus is to a large degree informed by a music genre, as opposed to a religious, political or even class ideology, the defining practices of the subculture are of the utmost importance. This is the energy and attraction

that these types of polity hold for their members, the tendency to define themselves in antipathy to a perceived mainstream that they expect to misunderstand them. This in turn is a reinforced othering of the subculture, as opposed to something which weakens the potential for meaning to be found within.

In addition to the 'uniform' or style of clothes worn by black mettalers, heavily applied white and black make up (often referred to as 'corpsepaint') as well as fake and in some cases real blood is also used for live performances and photo shoots. However the use of this kind of make up was generally reserved for special occasions and events, and it is/was a rare occurrence for music fans at concerts to mimic this style of make up (to do so would generally invite ridicule). The exception to this is sometimes to be found amongst much younger members of the crowd who occasionally wear corpsepaint in the style of the band playing or of their own invention. This is an area in which a generational gap is sometimes apparent as younger fans wearing corpsepaint are generally mocked by older fans and musicians. One of the explanations for this mockery was explained to me by a Serbian black metal musician who said that 'the corpsepaint is a ritual, it is not something special if everyone in the crowd is wearing it, this is not a Kiss concert'. Although some black metal musicians would cite Kiss as a young influence, there is a clear distinction drawn between the use of stage make up and corpse paint, the seriousness and lack of ironic self reflection in black metal renders outright imitation by fans as taboo.

The Founding Myth and 'Actions'.

Mayhem were the first of the (second wave of black metal) nineteen nineties Norwegian black metal bands to achieve notoriety when vocalist Dead, took his own life with a shotgun blast to the head. Dead's suicide note simply read "excuse all the blood".

Euronymous, Mayhem's guitarist and owner of a small record shop named Helvette (which translates as Hell), was the first to find Dead's body and before calling the police he is said to have taken photographs. These photographs were later used as the cover artwork for one of Mayhem's bootleg records.

Euronymous then took over as Mayhem's vocalist but was later stabbed to death by temporary guitarist Varg Vikernes (stage name Count Grishnack), of the one man band Burzum. Vikernes was convicted of Euronymous' murder along with other crimes relating to church arson and sentenced to twenty one years in prison, where he later rejected Satanism and black metal, instead choosing to adopt an overtly national socialist persona linked to the Odinic Asatru religion. Whilst in prison, Vikernes continued to record music, which was heavily influenced by Scandinavian folk music and mythology. Since his release from prison in 2010 he has stated in interviews on the www.burzum.com website that he never considered himself a Satanist, and that it was something said in jest to reporters which was taken more seriously than he had intended at the time.

Several further incidents involving murder, suicide and assault, occurred in Sweden, Russia and Poland, including the ritualistic suicide of Jon Nodsveidt, former lead guitarist and vocalist for the band Dissection. Nodsveidt had previously served a prison sentence for being an accessory to murder and was also a member/practitioner of an occult group known as the Order of the Nine Angles (ONO). This group use wilderness training, martial arts and other physical trials as part of their rituals. The type of magick (magick with a 'k' distinguishes between the tricks of a conjurer and magick as understood in an occult context, to mean the process of bringing about change in others, as explained Aleister Crowley (1989)) they practice is an eclectic blend of various mythic and religious systems merging Egyptian, Hindu, Sumerian and European ideas. This is a

practice known as chaos magick. Dissection's final album is heavily influenced by the texts, chants and rituals of the ONO. This album was quite innovative within the black metal scene and features a female backing vocalist singing in a haunting Arabic style similar to Ofra Haza's work on the song Temple of Love by The Sisters of Mercy. Following the release of this album, Dissection achieved widespread acclaim and toured extensively, including a gig at Exit Festival in Novi Sad during which the band met with members of The Stone and May Result. Nodsveidt's subsequent suicide came as a shock, especially considering how successfully Dissection had re-launched themselves. Kozeljnik from The Stone/May Result spoke about Nodsveidt as we were watching a Dissection DVD one evening and said that 'perhaps he had become too used to prison institution, or else maybe the scene was too different to the scene he knew when he went into prison'.

Another black metal musician named Bard Eithun (stage name Faust), who originally performed with the band Emperor but now plays drums for a death metal band (along with several other music projects), was also imprisoned for the murder of a man. Eithun claimed that the murder took place because the stranger made sexual advances upon him in a park one night. "Eithun received a 14 year sentence for murdering [the] a man in 1992 and church arson in the same year. Samoth [from the band *Emperor*] received an 18 month prison sentence for arson in March of 1995" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Metal_Inner_Circle acessed on 23/05/06). In interviews Eithun elaborated on the murder, saying that he had always been curious as to 'what it would feel like to kill someone'. The language and manner in which Eithun discussed the murder seemed to be quite casual and unrepentant, almost like someone discussing their early experiences of drug use or sexual experimentation.

Murder and suicide alone do not necessarily constitute a form of fundamentalism; members of the early Norwegian black metal scene also effectively declared war on Christianity and initiated a series of arson attacks on churches and grave yards. According to Ted Olsen, a contributing journalist for *Christianity Today*, "22 historic churches have been destroyed by arson since 1992, including Holmenkollen Chapel, where the late King Olav V and his family had attended" (Olsen 1997). However it must be borne in mind that Olsen was writing in 1997 and according to various internet sources, the attacks on churches have continued and are spreading to many other countries. A www.google.com search using "Satanist + church arson" will return millions of results with commentary on church attacks that have taken place all over the world.

Although the internet can potentially be a misleading source of unverifiable information, when it comes to music scenes it is quite useful for providing quantifying indications of where underground music has taken root. The black metal genre has now become well known as an underground music scene throughout Europe, parts of Asia, North and South America and is also present in Malaysia. According to a 2006 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_metal article, the Malaysian "government blames black metal music for a number of social problems" such as disrespect for parents and religion, as well as crime related "cases such as gang fights" (www.wikipedia.com accessed 20/03/06). This shows that even without the use of major record label distribution networks, black metal music as a cultural product is just as capable as any other form of music genre; of reproducing in new contexts and utilizing global networks.

Cultural artifacts play an important role in disseminating the black metal genre; despite Varg Vikernes' (of Burzum and formerly Emperor) incarceration (he was released in 2010), he has still managed to achieve a great deal of success through independent

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distribution channels around the world. Equally important in spreading and promoting the genre; is the sale and distribution of 'kvlt' black metal artifacts such as posters and t-shirts. A rare and particularly prized artifact is the Burzum zippo lighter which features a logo depicting the burnt out shell of Fantoft stave church. While in prison, Vikernes continued to record music, which was heavily influenced by Scandinavian folk music and mythology and his incarceration seems to have enhanced his prestige and lent his art an undeniable aura of authenticity. This 'aura' is based on the fact that Vikernes music/art has been supplemented with action for which he has remained unrepentant, whereas other individuals from that scene renounced their former church burning activities upon release from prison.

Initial Encounters with East European black metal.

     This section provides some biographical details that describe my personal experience and relationship towards so called 'alternative' music (scenes that to varying degrees are 'lived within') and the context in which I became aware of black metal in general. It includes a detailed and descriptive account of a metal festival in Slovenia which served as one of several 'ethnographic' opening scenes that led to this research project taking place.

     In August 2004, along with two friends/musicians from Ireland, I attended Metalcamp, a festival which took place in the Slovenian alpine village of Tolmin. Bands from several different music genres, ranging from black metal, punk, heavy metal, goth and even a classically trained ensemble were playing over the course of three days. Previously I had witnessed only a few smaller black metal concerts and I had never considered myself to be particularly knowledgeable with regards to the scene in Ireland.

However during that festival weekend in Tolmin the force and sonic intensity of some of the bands, and the fanaticism of their fans was something that I found shocking, but at the same time utterly compelling.

Many of the fans had German Iron Cross images on their clothing and tattooed on their bodies, in addition to the familiar sight of inverted crosses and pentagrams, stylized swastikas were also visible, something I had previously only associated with neo-Nazi skinhead subcultures. Normally at concerts I've attended in Ireland, UK, Belgium and France the use of swastikas and any other imagery associated with fascism is reflexively policed by punks and occasionally metal fans in what is often a critical and/or violent manner. The politicized nature of punk scenes usually produces a heightened sensitivity towards any form of right wing imagery. Within the punk scene there are also determined and reflexive efforts by bands and their fans to criticize and assault, but rarely ever, ignore or incorporate the appearance of symbols deemed by the scene to be 'politically incorrect'. This is apparent in the Dead Kennedys song '*Nazi Punks Fuck off*' (also covered by Napalm Death) and a myriad of other bands, people and organizations (such as Antifascist Action Group, Antifa), who work actively to promote left-wing, anarcho oriented ideologies within their music scene. As far as actual ideological 'diversity' is concerned within Irish and other mainstream metal and punk scenes, this 'diversity' tends to be of the musical rather than ideological variety. Therefore it rarely includes bands and fans that use the swastika as an aesthetic or political symbol, which is why I found its use so surprising at the festival in Slovenia.

Most of the crowd at the festival were friendly and with the assistance of alcohol, eager to engage in the sociable 'communitas' of the event. However some festival-goers had a very intimidating demeanor, and an obvious military gait (unsurprising given that

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many former Yugoslav and central European countries still enforce compulsory military service). Given the legacy of violence in the Balkans and the mythology and archetypes that developed in the Norwegian black metal scene, I began to wonder about the manner in which the aesthetics of a violent music scene are drawn upon in countries where the memory and effects of violent conflicts, bombing and sanctions are still present in people's lives.

This was by no means the first continental European festival we had attended but never before had we attended one in such beautiful surroundings. The main stage and festival area, was at the centre of a heavily forested village and several smaller stages, of varying sizes were spread out amongst large clearings in the trees. There was also a smaller stage located at the convergence of two crystal clear glacial melt water rivers on a long sandy bank. On all sides, heavily forested mountains provided a stunning and dramatic natural backdrop to the lights and excitement of the main festival area.

Unlike typical Irish festivals which tend to take place in crowded muddy fields, filled with hygienically dubious vendors selling vile hotdogs and extortionately priced warm beer in plastic cups, the food and drink at Metalcamp was inexpensive and delicious. There were numerous rustic wood framed tents serving tasty meat and bean stews, huge hunks of fresh bread for dipping and a carnivore's feast on the plentiful barbecues and spit roasts spread around the main festival area. There was also a good selection of beers for sale at the equivalent of one euro fifty a pint, and an array of pungent fruit brandies which enabled a hasty descent into drunkenness for anyone who feared the onset of sobriety that weekend!

So despite three of us traveling together from Ireland, by the time we'd sank a few beers we found ourselves separated and dispersed throughout the crowd, chatting and drinking with jovial metal fans from all over Europe.

Due to the extreme heat (by Irish standards at least) I spent most of the festival wandering around topless with a beer in each hand trying to keep cool and hydrated, sporting a manic 'half-price beer' grin plastered across my face. My friend had told me to go and check out an Austrian black/death metal band named Belphegor. They had recently courted controversy over the images used on their recent album cover, which featured photographs of two porn actresses scantily clad in nun's attire and kissing passionately. So in the spirit of anthropological inquiry, I decided to maneuver my beer encumbered self over in the direction of the smaller stage on which Belphegor were scheduled to play. As I moved closer to the stage the noise of the band became absolutely deafening, it was so loud that I could actually feel the machine-gun-sounding percussion of the bass drum reverberate in the back of my ribcage. I looked down at my chest and my nipple rings were actually shaking, such was the force of the sonic barrage emanating from the stage.

The crowds of fans were mostly young males, the majority of who wore their hair very long (waist length) or had shaven their heads completely. There was also an impressive selection of tattoos on display with many images of pentagrams, inverted crosses, demonic faces, Celtic knot-work and a few iron crosses and stylized swastikas. The band themselves were even more impressive, excessively and unashamedly macho, the singer and drummer were both playing topless and visually they all appeared as a blur of long hair, demonic tattoos, bullet belts, leather and spikes. Yet at no point did they appear in any way camp or gender ambiguous. In fact there wasn't even a hint of camp eighties style cock rock. The singer is spectacularly unusual looking - I'm still not sure if

he is extremely ugly, or the coolest most sinister looking guy in metal! Even with his face relaxed in between songs it still looks like a violent mask of hatred.

On my last trip to Serbia I was chatting to a friend about the band Belphegor and he laughed and said "those guys are fucking crazy - a few years ago they were supposed to play a festival here but turned up too late to play, the singer went insane and chased the promoter with a huge knife". But back to Metalcamp 2004, Belphegor played ferociously, a mix of intense double bass drum percussion, down-tuned bass guitars, wailing lead and haunting keyboards that rose and fell in deafening horror epic style crescendos. The vocalist's skull-like visage seemed to leer out over the crowd like a grim reaper with an angular black BC Rich guitar. This was a front man for whom corpse paint would look tame, given the maniacal leer of his unpainted face.

The fans too, were absolutely fanatical, shoving each other roughly, punching, swinging low kicks and slamming into each other and the stage as the band spurred on the violence with a wholly appropriate soundtrack. Instead of the usual inane grins and friendly male bonding that a mosh pit usually engenders, these guys were knocking chunks out of each other. No one was smiling, but everybody was entranced, and there is absolutely no doubt that a good time was had by all. Even the poor unfortunate individual who bust his nose just kept jumping around didn't seem mind as his blood streamed down onto his mouth and neck. Despite the appearance of wild unchecked violence, the rituals and conventions of the moshpit were being followed and when someone fell onto the ground, the people beside them were quick to get them back onto their feet, lest they be trampled in the frenzied mosh.

From the sidelines I was utterly captivated; I quickly downed my beers and entered the fray. It was impossible to organize my attention, usually at gigs I either watch

the band or get stuck into a good frantic punch up in the moshpit - most of the time it's possible to do both. Not here since the pit was insane, with beers flying through the air, studded jewelry lacerating people and a constant falling, rolling in the sand and being flung back on your feet by half crazed, drunken, quasi-simians. My new brothers! By the time the band had finished I was exhausted, bruised and bleeding from a few small cuts on my arms and ear. But I was utterly sated, and no band for the rest of that evening seemed as real or intense as the short time I had spent in the crowd in front of Belphegor.

I have often thought that the high and adrenaline rush of a good mosh pit is in many ways similar to a good drugs high. The first few hits are the most memorable and then it seems that you are forever left chasing that same thrill but never quite reaching those initial peaks. Ever since my first thrash metal gig watching Kreator and Death at thirteen years of age, I have been searching for that same thrill that comes about through the 'social Darwinist' experience and fear, of pitting oneself against the crowd. The mini-alliances and conspiracies that form to launch people skywards in order to crowd surf, the grappling with strangers that can offer temporary reprieve before breaking apart, and the frenzied blur of fists and elbows that bond the crowd together have always been one of the most enjoyable highs in my life. Here watching Belphegor, kicking ass and getting my ass kicked was like returning to a high that I thought no longer possible. This was the closest I had come to the violence and fear I remembered as a teenager at Kreator and Death. Not knowing if the friendly camaraderie will spill over into something more serious, and more importantly, not really giving a 'fuck' if it did!

I Blame the Parents.

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I have been a fan of so called alternative music all my life; I blame my parents' excellent taste in music for raising me on a diet of the Sex Pistols, The Clash, Sisters of Mercy, New York Dolls and the Cramps. Some of my earliest memories involve perusing the cover artwork of precious vinyl that I wasn't allowed touch. Later when I began to take an interest in music, it felt very special to sit down in the armchair beside the stereo as my father put his huge headphones over my ears and placed the needle into the grooves of the New York Dolls debut album. It was a wonderful feeling of transition sitting reading and listening to music on my own, a sense of privacy and escapism. I can't remember what I said when my father came back in to change the record over to the other side, but I knew I wanted more. As the years went by I began to acquire music of my own, seeking out heavier stuff, growing my hair long and seeking out others who liked the same things. In a pre-internet-facebook-twitter age, music was the social networking site for many people, especially in cities where there was more exposure to the sometimes colorful (punk/metal), sometimes monochromatic (goths) uniforms worn by members of subcultures. Seeing the cool, strange, exotic and sometimes scruffy groups of people who didn't look like everyone else fascinated me at a young age. It was also something of a shock to hear that few other kids' parents listened to bands such as The Cramps and Siousxie and the Banshees. I thought it was normal to walk around humming songs such 'Human Fly' and 'Love in a Void'. As a young teenager trying to impress older music fans I always loved the reaction when I told them my mother listens to The Cramps. Through shared tastes it became possible to 'break out' into social groups that were not from my immediate locality, and who weren't simply interested in football and whatever was in the charts. There was also the acquisitive zeal and quest for more knowledge that comes with seeking heavier and more extreme or transgressive forms of music. Most teenagers find it

quite easy (or have no desire) to shock their parents with loud obnoxious music. However mine had raised the bar slightly higher than most, the sex and booze anthems of Guns n' Roses were nothing new in a house full of Alice Cooper records. So whilst they did not always like the music I listened to, it was very hard to earn their disapproval. Although later I did go to great lengths in that endeavor, and made some headway with violent misogynistic 'bitch slappin' gangster rap! Though largely it was through the various aural extremes of heavy, thrash and death metal that I managed to cultivate a musical persona that was entirely of my own fashioning and distinct from that of my parents. Indeed I was actually horrified when the angst fueled whining of Morrissey and The Smiths were first played in the home, and there was dark mutterings about 'Curehead bashing' whilst my mother went through that particular phase.

It is through the rose tinted memory of the conditions of possibility afforded by musical taste and habitus that this thesis is composed, the awareness of music's potential to create alternative social structures that exist parallel to the everyday, which make the mundane bearable and punctuate the passing of time.

Yet before starting this thesis I was still relatively unfamiliar with the black metal genre of music, because by the age of fifteen I had grown tired of the pompous camp theatrics of mainstream metal and had immersed myself in the faux-authenticity and everyday violence of the Dublin punk scene. In the mid nineties the Dublin punk scene was thriving and I was a singer (in the loosest possible sense of the word) for a band called Frig Leat (at the time we believed the name was a Gaelic translation for 'Fuck You'). As one of the youngest bands on the scene we were treated quite well by some of the older members and managed to get some good support slots for well known bands such as Paranoid Visions and Citizen Fish (formerly Sub-Humans). One of our crowning

glories was the near riot we caused in an IRA affiliated pub when we played a song titled 'Fuck the IRA'. Subtlety was never a strong point back then.

A few years later and tiring of what I perceived as hypocrisy and too much politically correct proselytizing in the punk scene, I spent a long period wallowing in the druggy gender ambiguous sensuality of the Gothic scene. An older friend and I ran a goth nightclub, DJ'ing in a few suitably seedy Dublin bars. At the time it was a very small and intimate scene, absolutely rife with the kinds of sexual intrigues that would make De Sade blush. It was also a wonderfully theatrical scene and given that I was often wearing more make up than my date, getting to and from the venues was like running a gauntlet. But as with most intimate scenes, it was also fragile and particularly brittle, eventually splitting into pointless rivalries and bitterness after a fight with some rockabilly fans resulted in us losing our venue. Believing that 'might is right' I eventually drifted into the rockabilly/psychobilly scene.

By my early twenties I was working full time on archaeological excavations and maintained only a promiscuous association with aspects of the music scenes that I had in the past worshipped and immersed myself in so completely. Therefore when I arrived in Metalcamp in 2004 and having thought I had seen all that music had to offer, I really wasn't expecting to be so utterly blown away by a band that I had never heard of.

By this stage in 2004 I had just completed my under-grad thesis, a rather clumsy exploration of the capacity for and manner in which various groups of people interact with the landscape and monuments of Newgrange, the Boyne Valley and Stonehenge. I was still very much fired up with an anthropological wanderlust. Except that this time I wished to tackle something a lot more challenging, more in keeping with the romantic spirit of early anthropological research in which the exotic 'other' was the object of scrutiny. In my

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mind, this was a genre of research that could be crudely summed up as; 'going somewhere exciting, dark and wild and living with the most exotic species of human that can be found'. Van De Port has summarized this desire to understand the 'other' in reaction to the 'obstinate otherness' of Serbs he encountered during his fieldwork in Novi Sad (1999:9).

> It seems that in our vigorous attempts to make up for centuries of colonization and decades of impetuous othering in anthropology, we have focused so much on common divisors between ourselves and the people we study, that 'the other' that figures in anthropology begins to look 'just like us': they are as rational, as philosophical, as calculating, as we are (or as we are as 'wild', as superstitious and 'exotic' as they are). (Van De Port 1999:9)

When I returned to college in Maynooth after the festival in Slovenia I was determined to conduct some preliminary research into the black metal scene and find out if many anthropologists had also done so, or was this relatively new territory, an untapped 'other' at the heart of Europe?

Contextualizing a Music Scene: If Black metal is 'Alternative' Music, What Constitutes 'Mainstream' Music?

How far can, what appears to outsiders as teenage rebellion, go? In so-called extreme music scenes, to what extent are followers marginalizing themselves within their respective 'mainstream' societies? Although there is some degree of similarity and even to some extent, homogeneity found in black metal scenes in different countries, the so-called mainstream societies might differ radically in terms of what is acceptable as youth music. In order to address these questions, part of the background to this research project was to familiarize myself with the so called 'mainstream' popular music scenes in Serbia in order to gain a greater understanding of the 'alternativeness' or alterity of the Serbian black metal scene. My initial research using websites and literature has shown that alongside

well-known international recording artists, there is also a flourishing indigenous music genre known as 'turbofolk'. This style of music, "originated in the Balkans in the early 1990s, becoming increasingly popular during the Milosevic era", when trade embargoes and the war "led many citizens to take solace in the escapist sounds of commercial folk music" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turbo_folk accessed on 23/05/06). The actual term turbofolk was coined in the late nineteen eighties by Beograd musician Rambo Amadeus and combines two clashing concepts "'turbo', involving an image of modern industrial progress and 'folk', a symbol of traditional rural conservatism, suspicious of any innovation" (ibid.). As the war progressed during the nineteen nineties and Serbia became increasingly more insular, turbofolk began to supplant the globalized music stations that were taking root elsewhere.

> Superficially at least, Milosevic's Serbia represented one of the last pockets of resistance to the globalized culture of MTV, Sony, Time-Warner and Mc Donald's. It embraced indigenous art forms and shunned the embrace of Western corporate mediocrity. Despite being physically inside Europe, it rejected the new European cultural-economic hegemony. (Collin 2004:81)

During the war years and throughout Serbia's increasing international isolation, tackiness, hedonism and survival against all odds began to inform the music in terms of performance and lyrical content. Songs such as " *Ne Moz`e Nam Niko Nista* (which roughly translates as *No One Can Touch Us*), by Mitar Miric, celebrated Serbia's isolated position, and appealed to the general sentiment of the time. The turbofolk style became highly sexualized, trashy and commercial during the 1990s, particularly so after one of the leading artists Ceca married paramilitary leader Arkan in 1995.

> Arkan, 47, was the leader of a notoriously ruthless paramilitary group, the Tigers, which committed atrocities in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo, for which Arkan was indicted for war crimes. He was also the owner of a casino in the Hotel Yugoslavia -- which was bombed by NATO last spring (1999), a Belgrade pastry shop and the

country's premier soccer team, Obilic.
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Their lavish wedding was thought of as an unofficial merger of two worlds drawing together gangsters, military, politicians and celebrities in the hyper real hedonism and profiteering that marked and marred Serbia's international standing. Like many music scenes turbofolk typified a lifestyle the young people sought to emulate.

> Turbofolk in turn portrayed the nouveau riche as fabulous, enviable creatures, wearing Versace and sipping imported liquor, living a charmed life, role models of a fantasy Serbia. It created an imaginary world suggested by American writer Eric D. Gordy, "full of images of glamour, luxury and the good life" – a world populated by young women who drive luxury automobiles, live in fantastically spacious homes, and spend their time in fashionable hotel bars. Or as one Belgrader put it, less politely: 'turbo-folk said work less, earn more, cheat and steal, fuck a lot, drive a stolen Golf GTi, enjoy life. (Collin 2004:80).

For many people turbofolk was the soundtrack to the Balkan conflict; however this soundtrack was not the exclusive preserve of one side and Ceca's songs could be heard in on all fronts, in much the same way that versions of songs such as '*Lili Marlene'* were enjoyed by both German and British soldiers during WW II.

In Beograd, the radio station B92 managed to sustain its broadcasts throughout years of censorship and oppression under Milosevic and amidst accusations of betrayal by nationalists. Using a mix of protest-humour, subterfuge and international appeals, B92's DJs played music that seemed appropriate to the times, facilitating escapism from socio-economic hardship, but also confronting listeners with the harsh realities of war and critiquing the celebration of gangsterism that typified sections of Serbian high society and politics. In effect these broadcasts created important and diverse alternative publics that came together through music in order to both bear witness and seek change, for a time at

least. The 'world within a world' nature of music and popular culture based protest movements is vividly depicted in Matthew Colin's (2004) '*This is Serbia Calling*', where he traces the growth and enthusiasm of alter political groups such as OTPOR and other NGO's who came to prominence in Serbia during the mid to late nineteen nineties. Interestingly, unlike a few other commentators, Collins also traces the decline and transformation from counter culture to mainstream culture that took place amongst some of these groups. This is summed up rather neatly with an anecdote concerning OTPOR's slogan: when the movement was at its grass roots stage, followers used to use a stencil to spray-paint a stylized fist incorporating the OTPOR acronym, this logo is similar to and probably based on the double-thumbed raised fist of gonzo, used by Hunter S. Thompson during his campaign for the office of Sheriff in Aspen. However as OTPOR became less radical and increased in size, power and influence, a popular cartoon begun depicting the upturned OTPOR fist as the hand of a fat guy, slouched in an armchair holding a TV remote control.

Flat World Music.

The use of music to evoke a sense of collective identity is by no means a modern phenomenon. As with so many other aspects of contemporary modernity there is such a massive over-production of, and widening of access to new and old forms of music that our sense of time, distance and interconnectedness has, to paraphrase the uber-optimistic Thomas Friedman, become 'flattened' (2006). This means that through the internet and other forms of inter-active communication if a teenager records a new song in their bedroom in Serbia they can instantly web-cast it and receive feedback from other people in any area where an internet connection is present.

Given the importance of music in popular consciousness, I wish to provide a bit more background and context in which to describe extreme music in Serbia. During the years under Tito and throughout the eighties, Beograd had a thriving rock scene. The labyrinthine underground nightclub, Akademija was notorious for hosting some of the wildest parties in Europe, and even today the Lonely Planet Guidebook maintains that Beograd is swiftly recovering its reputation as the party town of central Europe. There are a number of reasons for this, first of all, there are at least sixteen large universities located in Beograd which means that at any given time the city is host to a disproportionately high population of young people. Secondly, Serbia in general is a very music loving country, it hosts an annual Guca (trumpet) festival in the town of Cacak every year which is the largest brass instrument festival in the world. Last year over 200,000 people attended from all over the world and the whole town and every venue and football stadium within the area reverberated to the jaunty cacophony of trumpets playing Balkan beats, gypsy tunes and folk music. This festival spans all ages and classes, from hugely successful big band orchestras such as Goran Bregovic's Weddings and Funerals Band, to gypsy musicians from extremely impoverished backgrounds, to foreign classically trained musicians, academics and composers, and members of the Balkan Diaspora.

Throughout Serbia there is something a love hate relationship between certain classes of musicians, especially gypsy musicians who are seen as being on the intersection between so called normal society, and their own, which is deeply stigmatized. Yet such is the regard in which many of these musicians are held that they are widely acknowledged; if not as an essential component of Balkan life, well then most certainly as a guilty pleasure. Many restaurants in Serbia will also employ professional musicians to perform on busy nights and no Serbian wedding would be complete without a raucous band

playing popular folk songs mixed in with what are often unintentionally hilarious re-workings of contemporary pop songs. On my last trip to Beograd my partner and I were eating at a Narodny (national) restaurant in the so called bohemian quarter when the house band surrounded us. The trumpets, violins and double bass closed in and we turned a bright shade of crimson as we tried to suppress the embarrassed urge to burst out laughing or run for cover. In between one song the singer asked us "where do you come from?", we replied "we're from Dublin in Ireland", expecting to hear a Balkan re-working of some popular Irish folk song. Instead the singer grinned mischievously and said "ahh Dahblin, I will play something you will like." Then the band launched into a spirited gypsy version of an Elvis Presley song, for the duration of which we were in hysterics, and relieved that we didn't have to bare witness to the murder of an Irish folksong. To this day I still have no idea whether the musician had mixed up Elvis as an Irishman, "Dahblin" as an American city, or whether it was (as I suspect) a hilarious joke!

Dutch anthropologist Mattijs Van de Port (1999) has drawn some interesting parallels between the relationship that some Serbs have to Gypsy musicians and the collective self-image that some Serbs hold in relation to their country's place in Europe. In the eyes of some, the world of the gypsies is partially a fantasy of wild otherness in which anything may happen and the passions dictate behavior. Van De Port describes the out-of-control lapse into this sensual world that takes place in cafes where gypsy bands performed. In these venues, the typical decorum of his interlocutors who had previously and at length set out their middle class credentials; broke down as music and alcohol dissolved the constraints on normal behavior. The wildness inside, their true Balkan nature was said to be set free, liberated by the musicians , whose otherwise marginal status places them closer to nature in this regard.

In the kafana, the local pub and scene of the lumpovati, Gypsy musicians rule the scene. And as they inspire their patrons to undo the bands of civilization, to drink and squander, dance and sing, laugh and cry, smash their glasses and make a shambles, smear their decency with mud and vomit, implicit social knowledge seeps in. (Van De Port 1999:24)

`The situation described by Van De Port problematizes some of the distinctions that are normally made between so-called alternative music and mainstream music. Largely because Serbia as a nation-state occupied a position that could in many ways be described as alternative to typical European nation states. Therefore the idea of music scene identity as resistance will be largely avoided in favor of a reading of Serbian music scenes as enmeshed in and emulating aspects of national identity.

Mainstream Satanism.

I have discussed Serbian music, turbofolk, and the radio station B92 in order to draw attention to some of the roles that music has played in Serbian people's lives and provide a context in which to depict the alterity of Serbian black metal. But in order to understand the distinctions being made between black metal in Scandinavia, and black metal in Serbia, distinctions must also be made that foreground the less explicit differences between Satanism in European black metal music, and Satanism as a lifestyle philosophy in America. These distinctions are important because of the tendency of relatively new social movements and music scenes to negate, contest, rebel against and also incorporate that which has gone before them. This is a method typically used to interpret the emergence of the UK punk scene during the 1970s, or the straight edge hardcore music scene in the 1980s. Although recent scholarship has contested some of these explanations, typically the punk scene was characterized as a reaction against the

aloof, aristocratic self indulgent tendencies displayed by the so called dinosaurs of rock, such as Led Zepplin and Pink Floyd. Pundits in the New Musical Express (NME) and journalists such as Julie Burchill, Gary Bushell, Paul Morley (Reynolds 2005) and in academia Stuart Hebdige (1983) tended to emphasize or sometimes invent strong class dimensions to punk. Although bands such as The Clash (the college educations of some members notwithstanding) and Sham 69 were strongly motivated by working class issues, this was a largely inaccurate depiction of the punk scene as a whole. Bands such as The Damned, The Stranglers, and The Buzzcocks owed a great deal more of their sound and general aesthetic to the so called dinosaurs of blues and art rock, deriving an often unacknowledged source of inspiration from The Velvet Underground and David Bowie. A nuanced reading, which is perhaps only available with hindsight, can easily identify the degrees of continuity between old 'traditional/classic' rock, and the punk scene as it emerged in the late seventies - it is by no means difficult to hear strains of Eddie Cochrane and Chuck Berry in the guitar riffs of the Sex Pistols.

Therefore, in order to avoid the infatuation with 'newness' that characterized early studies of the punk scene, this chapter will trace the degree of continuity between the black metal scene, as it emerged from the early nineties to the present. Whilst at the same time highlighting a few examples in which prominent voices in the scene claimed to be breaking with pre-existing uses of Satanism in music and forging particular novel genre innovations.

In Norway, the theatrical Satanism and macho posturing of nineteen eighties heavy metal acts such as Venom and Bathory was taken a step further than mere stage antics and set precedence for future acts to follow. Although it (Anton La Vey) sometimes distances itself from heavy metal music genres, the Church of Satan in America was the

source from which many earlier European and American bands derived their symbolic and stylistic repertoires. However aside from a few notable exceptions (Danish heavy metal musician King Diamond), very few of the older nineteen eighties bands delved too deeply into the ideology of Satanism on anything more than a superficial level. By the time bands such as Mayhem, Emperor and Darkthrone in Scandinavia began using Satanism, it was often in antipathy to the humanist leaning Satanism of La Vey and the American, Church of Satan. The following quote is from an interview with Varg Vikernes by Gavin Baddeley (2006:206) conducted whilst he (Vikernes) was on parole in 1993. The following succinctly illustrates Vikernes antipathy towards the humanistic tendencies he perceived in LaVeyan Satanism.

Baddeley: "*Are you a Satanic band?*"
Vikernes aka Count Grishnackh : "People think of Satanism as individualism, like with the Church of Satan. I don't want to be compared with those people. I don't really like the Christians so we are Satanists of course, but I prefer to call it Devil-worship when I talk to others. I don't like the word Satanism, because we have a lot of stupid bands making it into a stupid word. Bands like Bathory and Venom. I like those bands but they make fun of Satanism, all those bands like Slayer who claim to be Satanic and turn out being hard-core idiots. We are the way Venom and Bathory claimed to be. We believe what they pretended to believe (Vikernes in Baddeley 2006:206).

Satanic ideology as evinced in Anton La Vey's *Satanic Bible* (1992) promotes a self serving individualism based on the idea that every individual can be their own god. This may be an innovation of a theme espoused by Aleister Crowley, the third law of Thelema (Greek for willpower) which states "every man and woman is a star" (Crowley 1991). Yet the Satanists infused this idea with a corruption of the Nietzschean ideas of the superman and the will to power that is often propagated by elements of the extreme right. In terms of a scene sense of ethics, these intertwine with scene aesthetics to produce

occasionally contradictory discourses drawing upon Nietzsche and a might-is-right social outlook. Fillion in a discussion of Foucault's ethics alludes to a shift from institutionalized ethics to an ethics that infuses thought (2005).

> Anyone who has had occasion to sit on an "ethics committee" or an "ethics board" as these have sprung up in our contemporary institutional landscape will no doubt agree with Alain Badiou that there is something distasteful and stultifying about the conception of ethics that informs such practices. Worse than a practical waste of time, their vague reference to values and codified appeals to principles can indeed be seen, as Badiou suggests, as a form of nihilism and thoughtfulness. What to do then? Badiou himself shows how we must think *against* "ethics" (as an object of concern) by folding ethics back into thought, by showing how it is nothing other than the *singular* process of the confrontation with the truth of particular situations and living *up* to them (that is not submitting to them blindly or, as Badiou says, animalistically), seeing in them the possibilities afforded by faithfulness to that truth. Similarly with Foucault, ethics needs to be referred back to forms of thoughtfulness. (Fillion 2005:52-53).

For some of the early heavy metal and death metal acts, Satanism served as a useful shock tactic and a theatrical backdrop to the music. The black metal bands that emerged during the early nineties took things much further using the philosophy and ideology of La Veyan Satanism as a starting point but delving further into its roots and developing music and personal cosmologies that draw inspiration from the Pagan roots of their respective countries. Each person that I have spoken to during my research has tended to have their own philosophical chronology/biography of the manner in which they use Satanism. For many black mettalers, La Vey's (1992) "*Satanic Bible*" was a starting point, a basic text book which tended to confirm a person's pre-existing ideas rather than necessarily teach them something entirely new. This was the beginning of an aesthetic merged with ethics folded "back into thought" (Fillion 2005:53), an everyday attitude that may or may not find political expression but is relevant as scene discourse.

Satanism in this light should be thought of as a tool, used to strip away the layers of social conditioning that each person is enmeshed in, by virtue of living in predominantly Judeo Christian (including Orthodox) countries. Therefore La Veyan Satanism tends to be a useful tool for opening up new philosophical possibilities, but is rarely sufficient to constitute a holistic ideology in itself. This is where the blood, soil and mythology aspect of black metal is so important because once the musical 'career' or journey has begun in black metal, there needs to be something more substantial than simplistic blasphemous rebellion. These aspects are attractive at first, especially to young scene members, but what has provided the scene with its sense of cultural permanence, longevity and a capacity to outlive teenage fads, is the fact that for many of the older scene members; the blood soil and mythology aspects do in fact constitute a holistic lifestyle philosophy, or habitus. These few snippets of interviews conducted in 2005 provide a brief synopsis of this move from outright blasphemy of the black metal scene in 1993, to a more rounded holistic philosophy.

In an interview with Sam Dunne conducted for the (2005) documentary ' *True Norwegian Black Metal'* (a mini-follow up documentary that accompanied the release of the documentary, '*Metal a Headbangers Journey'*), Gaahl the former vocalist with the band Gorgoroth explains a more nuanced version of his use of Satanism;

> **Gaahl**: "We don't stand for socialism, we don't stand for democracy, we stand for the strongest, survival". "My main goal is to procreate Satan". "The main goal is to remove the word Satanism from everyman's tongue and just become it." (Gaahl in Dunne, '*True Norwegian Black Metal, a Documentary'*, 2005).

In an interview for the 2005 documentary '*Metal a Headbangers Journey'* Gaahl was questioned about the church burnings and the role of Satanism in black metal.

Gaahl: "The church burnings and all of these things are a thing that I support one hundred percent, and it should have been more and it will be done much more in the future". "We have to remove every trace from Christianity…. And what the Semitic roots have to offer this world". "Satanism is freedom for the individual to grow and become the superman, every man who is born to become king, becomes king, every man who is born to become a slave, does not know Satan." (Gaahl in Dunne, "*Metal a Headbangers Journey*", 2005).

In these snippets of interviews, Gaahl appears to be describing a typical black metal/Satanic discourse. However, in other interviews the idea of being a Satanist was explained further, whereby Gaahl stated that he only uses the term Satanist because it is one that is understood as 'the enemy' in a Christian society. What he is 'tapping into' is the idea of a pre-Christian dialectic that words cannot sufficiently express, due to the fact that all of the frames of reference are within a Christian context. This is a concept which is not dissimilar to the theme of 'resurgent atavism' as described by Carl Jung, and the reference to the "superman" in the interview with Gaahl also refers to the (fascistic misinterpretation of) Nietzschean philosophy of the superman and the will to power as understood in national socialist/social Darwinist philosophy (Goodrick Clarke 2003:227 – 231).

So if the early nineteen nineties black metal bands were both utilizing and rebelling against a pre-existing version of Satanism, how has this developed as black metal increased in popularity and has split into several distinct sub-genres? In much the same way as heavy metal (the parent genre) split into sub-genres such as death, thrash, Pagan, folk and black metal. As a general rule, within subjectively controversial music scenes premised on a concept of rebellious innovation within a genre, there is a need or tendency to sub-divide into further refined genre categories. Perhaps the most

controversial of these categories within black metal, is the sub-genre of national socialist black metal, often referred to as NSBM, NS, or NS black metal.

When an available repertoire of controversial symbols becomes overused, depleted or passé, it can lead to a form of genre stagnation. When this occurs bands and individuals must either innovate musically, or utilize previously taboo symbolic repertoires in order to further the levels of perceived deviancy within a scene. With the inverted cross, pentagram and other blasphemous symbols becoming so commonplace within black metal, a new wave of bands have begun using one of the most controversial symbols in the Euro-American consciousness, the swastika. As with the initially superficial use of the inverted cross and pentagram, the use of swastikas and its' associated ideologies have developed into something much more earnest and deeply considered.

Increasingly on Internet sites, magazines and through word of mouth the sub-genre of national socialist black metal has gained a good deal of attention, unsurprisingly most of this has been negative. However the actual size of the NSBM scene is difficult to quantify, many bands associated with this genre do not label themselves as National Socialist, it is normally a label applied by others to bands and musicians who profess 'pagan', 'heathen' beliefs or a connection between blood, soil and mythology in their music. Rob Darken of the Polish band Graveland, expresses his views in the following: "the spirit of paganism lives still in the melodies of my songs, reminding us of our cultural and spiritual identity" (Massa 1999:55). One manifestation of this 'cultural and spiritual identity' is apparent in the language used by some NSBM musicians, and it bears a not unintentional similarity to Nazi rhetoric, yet many fans and musicians insist that they are not political. This is difficult to take at face value because it sounds so similar to

the types of pronouncements made by neo-nazi skinhead and white supremacist groups,

but the literature, which deals with the wider black metal scene, seems to support claims

that they are not political.

"With its condemnation of Judeo-Christian ethics, shocking aesthetic, and brutal

sound, black metal represents the ultimate rebellion", states Massa (1999:52) in slightly

alarmist tones. But unlike neo-nazi, punk and skinhead music scenes, the sound structure

and social structure of black metal has not resulted in the same types of racially inspired

violence at a street level. Whereas neo-nazi skinheads have been associated with football

hooliganism, attacks on many minority groups throughout Europe and are/were regularly

deployed as the grass roots muscle of political parties such as England's BNP or the

National Front. This has not been the case with the European black metal scene, as its

violence has centered either on churches or upon other individuals within the scene. In an

article which treats black metal as a social problem and lumps many totally unconnected

bands together under the label of NSBM, Justin Massa states that the black metal:

> Scene does not try to evangelize; instead they wait for new adherents to burrow
> their way into the scene. Nor do NSBM'ers advocate highly structured
> organizations... Rather, they encourage "lone wolf" tactics like church arson and
> unplanned murders. (Massa 1999:51)

The tone of the article by Massa (1999) wholly misses the point that the black

metal scene is a music subculture with a flexible membership; Massa treats the music

scene as though it was a structured institution or grass roots political movement.

In an article by Jewish metal fan (see www.metaljew.com) and sociologist Keith

Kahn-Harris' which discusses reflexivity within the black metal scene, Kahn-Harris

describes how the "private sphere effectively ironizes the public sphere" meaning that

anything is utterable because in practice relationships and social interactions are rendered

mundane and ordinary (Kahn-Harris 2004:103). This is a much more perceptive and scholarly approach as it takes into account both theory (black metal scene pronouncements), and practice (examining inflammatory statements in the context of everyday social interaction using ethnography). Using this approach to a subject provides an important insight into the manner in which possibly offensive, idiotic and contradictory statements are regularly made in the various forms of black metal media (zines, blogs, websites, etc), but are not necessarily acted upon or taken seriously. This demonstrates the extent to which the investigative journalist approach taken by Massa allows no possibility for an understanding of the reflexive practices used by scene members, whereby discourse is produced specifically for circulation within the scene as opposed to activist type discourse which is used for political objectives. This type of approach would tend to hark back to the CCCS nineteen seventies approach to subcultures whereby there was an over-emphasis on the perceived political ethos of music scenes at the expense of examining actual practice.

Basically it is a flawed a method of analysis when theory (song lyrics and media statements) is over-privileged and accepted as practice (meaning the everyday reality of the scene). Critics of this overly political (often) Marxist approach have highlighted several problems, namely the tendency towards male centered subject matter, lack of a gendered perspective, a failure to engage with the domestic sphere and an over emphasis on 'working class' cultures (Bennett & Kahn Harris 2004:6-8).

Kahn-Harris cites the example of a Norwegian black metal musician who made some widely reported anti Semitic statements in interviews (theory), but in practice had a good working/social relationship with Israeli musicians (2004: 103). Unlike punk, skinhead-oi music, and some rap music, black metal is not inspired or rooted in class or

social structures, the 'blood and mythology' aspects of black metal have more in common with the romantic escapism of gothic music and social scenes. Many black metal bands use pagan and nationalist mythology in order to personalize and create a more 'authentic' rejection of Christianity, rather than just ape the shock tactics of their musical predecessors. Black metal bands are just as likely to draw on Tolkien or HP Lovecraft for their musical inspiration. Samoth of the band Emperor states that "black metal by its very nature has to deal with dark philosophies" (Massa 1999:52), whereas punk and skinhead scenes sang and acted against targets they perceived as social threats. Black metal is far more conceptual and introverted, therefore is less likely to manifest in the types of coordinated gang activities that made punk and skinhead scenes so politically potent. Rather the nationalistic elements of black metal are a way of diversifying, pushing conceptual boundaries and infusing the music with a pronounced occultism (meaning 'that which is hidden from the uninitiated') that sets it apart from more popular metal sub-genres. In most countries where a black metal scene exists, this occultism is developed to suit ethno-national contexts, the Polish band Graveland, fuse their music with folksy medieval sounds derived from Polish medieval compositions. In this they are influenced by Burzum who draw from traditional Norse poetry songs and singing styles. The Serbian bands May Result and The Stone, sing in Serbian, use Cyrillic script in their CD artwork (even though the CDs are circulated globally) and also sing about, and utilize a complex cosmology based on Slavic pre-Christian mythologies. Although most of these bands started out from a vehemently anti-Christian stance, many have moved on and formed their own cosmologies based on a syncretic mixture of occult and ethno-mythological philosophies fused to black metal scene conventions and attitudes.

Myth; Archetype and Fantasy Music Scenes.

Archetypal fantasies fused with peer group social aspirations can be powerful motivating factors and it is common for music fans, to want to emulate their heroes. A tragic example of this occurred in Italy 1998, when two sixteen year olds, Fabio Tollis and Chiara Marino disappeared after a nights drinking in a well known heavy metal bar in Milan. Police enquiries and searches yielded no results and after a few months Fabio's father Michele initiated his own investigation. Having familiarized himself with music and artifacts from Fabio's collection, Michele "began to attend metal concerts and festivals across Europe, handing out leaflets and quizzing Fabio's friends" (Bagnall 2005). Over the course of six years Michele Tollis worked to compile a dossier on Fabio's friends until 2004 when a former friend of Fabio's, Andrea Volpe pleaded guilty to the police for the murder of his girlfriend. Michele Tollis then handed over his dossier to the police and Volpe eventually led them to the spot where Fabio and Chiara had also been murdered and buried. It transpired that a group of Fabio's friends had perpetrated these and several other murders. This group of friends called themselves 'The Beasts of Satan' and were fans of 'Satanic death metal' music. A BBC documentary about the events, describes various stages of teenage initiation into a music based social scene, escalating drug use, ritualized (scarification) self harm and macho displays of ritualized violence inspired by their music tastes and a particular mind set that took hold within the group (Bagnall 2005).

The story of these violent events I have described circulated widely and has become part of the mythology and back story that accompanies the extreme metal scene (which includes black metal and other genres of metal where media and website discussions of the events took place). For many people extreme music scenes and interests

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are a phase, part of growing up that requires long or short term commitment and varying levels of involvement. However for some people, music scenes can also become an all-encompassing way of life and an essential component in the make up of a person's identity, cosmology, community and habitus. The accumulation of cultural capital within music scenes involves the collection of 'sacred' artifacts, attendance at special events, devotion to a scene and its members and a selective rejection of 'outside' influences deployed on a negative capital basis. This has been well described in overtly political youth subcultures such as 'punks', 'skinheads' (Hebdige 1981) and 'new age travelers' (Bendar 1999). One of the interesting innovations within the black metal scene is the way in which its members use symbolism in manner which may appear to outsiders as unreflexive, but when articulated by insiders, is based on alternative cosmologies negotiated through scene and personal research, bricolage and the performance of a scene identity. For many young people involved in extreme music scenes authenticity (or being 'true' in black metal) can be very important, the correct uniform, opinions, and reflexive scene policing and exclusion can develop a major relevance to people's lives. Yet for others, participation in a scene comes easily and suits their personalities, a music scene can be cathartic, a release of tension, escapism from the real or imagined pressures of society or (for younger members) parents.

There are few if any bounded cultures and the intersections that happen through representation (insider and outsider) are ideal starting points from which to explore subcultural phenomenon. My interest in studying the Serbian black metal scene stems in part from an interest in types of representation and contested meaning. My immersion in the Serbian scene has allowed me to explore and make sense of the spectacle of the wider

black metal scene through familiarity with the day to day reality of local scenes in Beograd and Novi Sad.

Why Serbian Black Metal?

For a number of years Serbia has been represented as something of a pariah state, the aggressor in various ethnic conflicts. Although the political and social situation has changed, there still existed a good deal of misconception and negative stereotypes regarding the country and some of its inhabitants at the beginning of my fieldwork. This was a common trope of discourse concerning Serbia and the wider Balkan region, and one which has appeared in the gaze of western travelers over a number of centuries, depending on prevailing attitudes (Jezernik 2004). Van De Port (1998) makes good use of the "wild" category in his ethnography based in Novi Cad at the end of the nineteen nineties. This theme running throughout his work is informed by his attempts to reconcile the polite well-spoken inhabitants he interacts with, with the wars and bloodshed taking place at the (imagined) margins and shifting borders of the country. One of the strengths of Van De Ports analysis is his advocacy of accepting the messy unreconcilable of daily life in flux, over the academic tendency to tidy things up (1998:25). To illustrate this point he draws on Taussig's premise that:

> Yage nights challenge this ritual explanation of ritual. They make us wonder at the academic rites of text-making, at the means of creating intellectual authority, and above all, at the convention of "ordering" the chaos of that which has to be explained. (Taussig in Van De Port 1998:25)

During my first visit to Serbia in 2006, many of the people I spoke to were keen to address their countries tarnished image and spoke eloquently and convincingly with regard to their side of the story. My initial impressions of Beograd and the people I met

there were extremely positive, Serbian hospitality is the warmest I that I had experienced

in quite a long time and despite a few visible signs of lawlessness on the part of some

young male 'entrepreneurs'/gangsters, the city is very safe. At the back of my mind the

question often lurked, has this doorman/bouncer, policeman or soldier killed someone in

battle? But in daily life in Serbia, the presence of violence was greatly diminished in

comparison to the presence of violence in Dublin or many other large towns in Ireland.

Therefore it is difficult to reconcile the experience I had in Serbia, with the shadow of

violence and the cracked veneer of civilization that Van De Port (1998) depicted.

With regards to Beograd music scenes, there is a thriving nightlife and many live

music events to attend most nights of the week.

The Stone, logo taken from www.stonehordes.com

There is a fascinating air of unpredictability with regard to the Serbian black metal

scene, local Beograd band The Stone, whose moniker is 'Slavonic Order of Hatred', seem

to rub salt into the wounds of ethno national conflict. To outsiders, the 'Order of hatred'

banner seems overtly political and extremely nationalist, but this is to misinterpret wider

trends in the black metal scene whereby hatred and misanthropy are articulated as negotiable genre attitudes and need not necessarily be acted upon. Having talked at length with Kozeljnik, guitarist and one of the founders of bands The Stone and May Result, I learned that their lyrical and conceptual themes are anything but political, at least not in a context that is intended politically by the band and most fans. The Stone's music is based on Serbian Pagan mythology, infused with other more typical black metal influences and iconography. When I asked Kozeljnik about one of The Stone's stylized swastika surrounding-an-inverted-cross logos, he patiently explained that it is not a swastika but a Slavic sun wheel an image used by many ancient cultures, long before the Nazis ever took it. For Kozeljnik, Paganism and Satanism are intertwined; Satanism for him does not mean a confrontational inverse of Christianity whereby the only meaning inherent in Satanism is an oppositional one. For Kozeljnik and others I spoke to, Satanism and Paganism are used as an artistic and individualistic philosophy, whereby meaning is personal and the symbolism is simply the outer layer of a deeper occult cosmology. This personal cosmology derives from various influences such as music, literature, the Slavic pre-Christian pantheon and other works, which are adopted un-dogmatically to suit people's lifestyles.

Serbian black metal scene members are highly aware of the legacy of black metal but are musically and personally closer to an eastern European scene than the Norwegian one. Most bands are extremely patriotic, some (younger bands) are nationalistic/patriotic and supporters of Ratko Mladic (during our first meetings, but this changed over time). Although this may have been said to shock me at the beginning of my research, as prolonged periods of 'deep hanging out' have shown this attitude to be one that whilst not

exactly supporting Mladic or other 'war crimes' detainees, these issues used to be raised as an excuse to put forward a 'Serbian' version of events.

Bands that have been labeled by some people as National Socialist black metal have occasionally played play in Serbia before and during my field work, and Serbian bands were in turn hosted in their countries for concerts and festivals. For some people in the Serbian black metal scene, there is little or no distinction made between national socialist black metal and 'normal' black metal, it is all just seen as 'music'. As such the NS bands have less of a stigma attached in Serbia than in other former Yugoslav scenes such as in Zagreb and Ljubljana. However some of the divisions that are said to typically exist between scenes in former Yugoslav countries are played down in the black metal scene and this is replaced with a strong sense of Pan-Slavic unity that unites many of the bands and fans.

Methodology

At the beginning of my research I started learning to speak Serbian and by the end of my second fieldwork period this had progressed to a basic conversational level and an ability to comprehend a good deal of what was going on around me. Unfortunately I never developed a full fluency, though most of my friends and interlocutors were/are fluent English speakers who were keen to practice as often as the opportunity arose. There were also a number of occasions when bands and fans from other European countries were visiting and in general English was the common lingua fraca.

As a history graduate, I have a tendency to want to understand the present as an outcome of past events and actions, so a good deal of my preparatory research involved studying the history, mythology and politics of Serbia and the wider Balkan region. This was

particularly useful as there is a strong anti/alter-historical tendency within the black metal scene and many people that I spoke to were keen to engage in a kind of historical debate that was well informed by quite revisionist and 'volkish' interpretations of Balkan history. Shared historical experiences seem to hold an important place in the black metal scene and many people to whom I spoke had a detailed knowledge of Ireland's colonial legacy which people sometimes compared to Serbia's period under Ottoman rule. The popularity of films such as '*Michael Collins'* and '*In the Name of the Father'* also formed a basis for many pub debates and discussions of historical oppression.

Between September 2006 and to date I have spent approximately thirteen months living in Serbia, with two longs terms stays (3-4 months duration) and many shorter trips (1-3 weeks duration) in order to attend events, concerts, upheavals (the aftermath of Kosovo's secession and the Eurovision song contest) and visit friends and interlocutors made throughout this research project. During the entire project and to this day I have always been made to feel extremely welcomed and was offered a great deal of help, instruction, hospitality and friendship that has affected me deeply and begun what I expect to be an enduring relationship with the country and people of Serbia.

I also had the opportunity on a few occasions to meet with some Serbian ethnologia/anthropology post-grad and under-grad students who provided some feedback and information with regards to older forms of musicological research in Serbia. As far as I can tell however, native anthropologists have tended to focus on rural (ethno-folk) and gypsy music, rather than urban music (with the exception of Turbofolk). I was deeply fortunate in that my participation in the black metal scene developed almost as soon as I arrived, and amongst a group of people in Beograd and Novi Sad who are absolutely instrumental in orchestrating the Serbian scene, performing in two of the most famous

Balkan black metal bands (The Stone and May Result), running a (small scale) concert booking agency, record label, websites, and various metal nights in bars and night clubs. This allowed allow me to gain something close (as is ever possible) to an insider perspective, for most of the time spent living in Serbia I shared an apartment with Kozeljnik (co-founder of The Stone and May result) and his (then girlfriend, now) wife Jelena.

The periods spent living with Kozeljnik and Jelena always tended to be quite relaxed with a good deal of time spent in conversation. On most days (during 2006/2007) I would also accompany Kozeljnik to work during a period when he worked in a small rock/metal record shop in downtown Beograd called Mordor. Ironically, according to Tim Judah (2000) Mordor is also the nickname that foreign journalists gave to Beograd during the war years. The name stems from Tolkien's '*Lord of the Rings*' and in the novel it was a depressing and grim realm place of death despair and misery (2005).

Another crucially important friend and interlocutor is Milan, or Urok which is his pseudonym in The Stone and May Result, and who had previously worked as a journalist for various fanzines and the Serbian version of the international magazine Metal Hammer (in 2006). Urok has also worked as a concert organizer running a small booking agency called Awaken which brought many of Europe's big names in black metal to play in Serbia, sometimes with The Stone or May Result playing support, although quite often local bands such as Wolfs Hunger and Zaklan would also get important and career enhancing support slots. Due to his considerable experience within the metal music industry Urok was also hired as the stage manager each year for the past few years on the Metal Hammer (later the Explosive stage after Metal Hammer ceased its Serbian

operations) stage at the internationally renowned Exit festival which takes place during the summer in the huge Petrovaradin fortress in Novi Sad.

This festival began in the year 2000 as a musical response to the difficulties Serbs were experiencing when trying to travel and book visas, and in the first few years there was a strong focus on political issues, as well as trying to bring important contemporary artists to the youth of Serbia. The name Exit derives from the slogan 'we must Exit out of the last ten years of madness' a reference to the chaos and instability of the 1990s and the Milosevic regime. My frequent stays in Novi Sad at Urok's apartment, which he originally shared with now ex-girlfriend Dragana, her friend Renatta and Urok's closest friend 'Veliki' (meaning big) Marko. The periods spent in Novi Sad tended to be raucous booze fuelled parties that generally went on for days at a time and which on several occasions involved nights during which Urok organized for me to play a DJ set at local metal/skinhead bars. So whilst Novi Sad is generally regarded as very slow paced and relaxed, and Beograd regarded as hectic and busy lots going on, for me it was often the other way around. Beograd was where I retreated from the madness in order to recover from the frantic hedonism and laughing-til-it-hurts, all-nighter festivities in Novi Sad. Whenever we did find quieter moments Urok and Veliki Marko devoted a good deal of time to talking about subjects that have come to inform this thesis. He was always on hand to offer useful feedback and criticism on everything from my understanding of Serbian metal, music and politics, to the best way to cook and prepare Serbian delicacies such as pig's brain and svartzi (deep friend chunks of crispy pig fat, also known as Serbian popcorn). So whilst my relationship with Kozeljnik in Beograd with whom I lived was very close, there were aspects of a teacher-student, and at times 'older brother' dimension to our friendship. Some younger members often refer to him as 'Stari Papa' or

wise old man. Whereas with Urok and Veliki Marko the friendship was very deep and we did take a good deal of care for each other (particularly during drunken accidents), we also dedicated ourselves spectacularly to hedonistic recreation. Therefore, our interactions were a bit more egalitarian and almost always infused with a perversely mischievous devotion to a rock n' roll party-til-you-pass-out lifestyle.

The majority of the face to face research for this project took place through 'deep hanging out', conversations and attendance at events and band rehearsals. During the early phases I took copious amounts of notes and photographs where appropriate, the notes were then refined, worked up further and expanded upon in diaries on a nightly basis. I had initially tried questionnaire type interviews with some of the first groups of metal fans that I met, but found this method far too limiting. There was also a tendency (amongst members of younger bands) to change the dynamic of these structured interviews into music journal/fanzine style answers which at times were informative but in general only produced the kind of information that was readily available on bands websites and myspace.com pages. There was also an amusing tendency towards engaging in what I would (jokingly) refer to as bad mock heroic verbiage, in which band members would talk about themselves and bands as 'warriors spreading black metal hate from the darkest winters of their souls'. So whilst this might make a good sound byte in a fanzine, in person I was barely able to keep a straight face. When this happened I have found that it was much better to discuss subjects closer to home, gossip, engage in conversation casually, and basically spend a lot more time listening to people then actually questioning people. After a while my interlocutors grew accustomed to occasionally being stopped mid sentence as I scribbled in my notebook in order to try and record quotes accurately.

Initial Encounters Again, How and Why?

Gradually as I spent more and more time with people in Serbia the techniques used for recording experiences and information changed, this was imperative given the extent to which relationships and interactions changed. For example, when sharing an apartment with Kozeljnik, I tended to keep a diary and every so often I would show Kozeljnik what had been written. This turned out to be hugely beneficial as it led to further discussions, and explanations in which misconceptions could be discussed further and occasionally points of interpretation could be debated. But it was during my first short trip to Serbia, undertaken in order to assess the feasibility of this project that this semi-structured methodology was developed. The following is based on my notes from that period.

> The night before I left Beograd at the end of my first nine day pre-research trip to Serbia, Kozeljnik invited me to a band rehearsal for The Stone and this was an excellent opportunity to witness the communitas that took between the musicians. Milosh a friend of Kozeljnik also accompanied us and despite his grim black metal demeanor, he was actually giddy with nervous excitement at seeing The Stone in the rehearsal studio. In this context 'communitas' is used to illustrate the quasi egalitarian connectedness that I witnessed between members of The Stone during their rehearsal, but which was also obvious through Milosh' sense of contained excitement. The band took a while to get set up, especially Zombi the drummer and Demonstratas the guitarist. Nefas the tall and quiet vocalist spoke very little as he set up his equipment, whereas Kozeljnik and the others maintained a friendly banter as they teased Demonstratas the youngest member.

When they began to play the first song it sounded messy and out of tune during the intro and the first minute or so, almost slightly painful to listen to. At this stage I was only beginning to memorize and become familiar with their songs and I didn't fully recognize what was being played. The intro to the song *Za Kosta Otaca* (the bone turns) is quite long and slightly repetitive, but after a while it builds to a crescendo and bursts into a frenzied catchy riff that has Milosh headbanging away in the corner.

Earlier Milosh had told me he has seen the Stone many times but this was the first time ever to see them in rehearsal. By the second song the band were playing at furious pace, there was condensation on the ceiling of the tiny rehearsal room and every drumbeat seemed to reverberate through my ribcage. Every so often during the sudden breaks and tempo changes that were timed to perfection, Kozeljnik and Zombi would make eye contact and count each other in with a few subtle nods to signify changes. Demonstratas tended to follow Kozeljnik's lead and paid close attention to these gestures. Although Zombi was using a single kick bass drum pedal (most black metal bands used double kicks to achieve the machine-gun percussion sound) his feet were a blur. The room thundered with the bass drum, and whilst I have occasionally seen other black metal drummers maintain a similarly rapid tempo (at the expense of depth of sound and reverberation), Zombi managed to sustain speed and an intense reverberating beat as his whole drum kit shook furiously under his barrage.

Here could be witnessed a wealth of non-verbal communication and performative, expressive negotiations of power, attitude and the sense of prestige that this 'elite' Serbian black metal band has achieved. I have watched many bands rehearsing over

the years amongst friends in Ireland, but have seen few who can play such a fast and sonically brutal style of music with such depth and complexity of sound and texture. In this context the band's interaction with one another was very different from their stage(ed) performances, it was possible here to see various aspects of scene identity as well as stage persona, but also to understand the internal dynamics of the band. Milosh's excitement and the extent to which he was so carried away, self consciously headbanging is a good indicator of the power that The Stone will have over their audiences when playing live. (Fieldnotes September 2006)

However having spent the past four years going to and from Serbia and seeing people and relationships change and develop or sometimes fragment and fall apart, it is with a fondness that I remember the cozy microcosm of the band rehearsal and the newness of the insights that those first encounters revealed. Most of the people I met (in 2006) were in their mid to late twenties (approximately the same age as I was), so the initial meetings and interactions were very comfortable and facilitated an easy dialogue. There was also a deal of shared social outlooks and tastes in esoterica, film, food and other interests, which meant that the interactions were not solely confined to exchanges of information about music or scene related research.

(The Stone in rehearsal studio, right to left are Nefas, Demonstratas, Kozeljnik and Zombi. Photo taken by author in (2006).

When I met with younger (mid to late teens) musicians from bands such as Raw Gore, Tamerlan, Zaklan and some of the other young black metal bands, I conducted slightly more formal interviews to begin with. But this technique functioned more as an ice-breaker in the hope that after a while the conversation would became more 'natural'. This has tended to work reasonably well when meeting younger scene members and helped in a small way to 'legitimize' the odd spectacle of a foreigner who had come to Serbia to 'study black metal'.

A technique, which was highly successful at the beginning of this project, with regard to establishing contacts and hearing about events, was using internet forums. This also revealed a few surprising insights in relation to the 'glocalized' nature and use of the

internet. Several of the people I met when socializing in Beograd for the first time, were

people that I had previously asked questions on internet forums whilst I was in Ireland.

Some of these people would spend many hours each week chatting on forums,

exchanging information, jokes, pictures, music and the usual gossip and stories. One

evening in 2006 after a metal concert in Beograd I was invited to a bar by some people I

had met in Kozeljnik's record shop. Here I was introduced to several people who had

already heard that I was interested in writing about their music scene. It transpired that

three of the nine people sitting at our table were the hosts of the chat-rooms I was using

and another person was the vocalist with a band called Interfecter from Banja Luka in

Republika Srpska (Bosnia). So despite the internet being commonly interpreted as a

global communication network, the people using the chat-rooms in Beograd were most

often locals who socialize together on a regular basis as well as maintaining connections

to people from other scenes nationally and globally.

Whilst living in Beograd I tended to fill quiet periods of my time with internet

research and from this it became possible to graphically map out some of the connections

between Serbian black metal scene members and people and bands from other countries.

This later led to meeting foreign fans of Serbian black metal during trips to the

surrounding countries and also a chance to meet other people who were traveling to

Serbia in order to attend concerts. This enabled an insight into how the Serbian bands

were/are regarded further a-field and the types of prestige associated not only with the

music they produce but also by their "Serbian-ness" which in the eyes of many non-Serb

black metal fans is a further layer of 'rebel prestige'. Some of these other influences on the

Serbian scene will also be explored in the chapter 'At the Heart of Europe', which delves

into a more politically infused sub-genre of black metal.

Right from the beginning of this project the Serbian people I spoke to were deeply interested in Ireland, it's people, history, mythology and in particular the economy, which in 2006 - 2007 was still enjoying the so called Celtic Tiger, I had even heard of Irish 'experts' giving lectures to members of Serbian local government on how to emulate the Celtic Tiger. Hopefully these same charlatans are now being horse whipped out of town for their myopic view of a pyramid scheme that was bound to fail. Looking back, Ireland's 'economic miracle' was never an easy one to explain to people and my usual attempts involved descriptions of road building projects, property speculation, tourism and all of the temporary chimera that outwardly expressed a buoyant economy. I was often asked by an economically savvy friend (also) named Marko, from Uzice, "what does Ireland manufacture in such large numbers that it can be so successful"?

"Erm.... beef, I suppose and some computer components", was my reply. It was never really a satisfactory explanation and the past few years have revealed why. Therefore part of this project will be concerned with trying to take account of the changes that took place throughout the course of this research, and the messy process of time passing and hindsight that have so colored my views. The past and the present have now morphed from lived experiences into abstract words on a page and where possible (and allowable) there will be exaggerations, overstatement and a tendency towards 'magpie-like' chasing of the shinier details (spectacle) in order to translate experience into a story or narrative. But these will also be shaped and given context and substance by the everyday, the mundane (as understood by Keith Kahn-Harris 2006), and some of the minutia of experience that allow the 'sacred' aspects of music scenes, to be thought of as such.

Overall, my approach will be quite conservative, but not in an obvious way; instead focusing on anthropological themes which may have lost some of their relevance

or "sheen" in light of post/hyper modern theories of identity (de)construction. When I first began thinking about black metal as a general research topic I fixated on the political aspects of its iconography. However my experience at concerts, festivals and meeting people has taught me that it is not a political scene in the same sense as the punk or skinhead subcultures to which it has been unfairly compared (Massa 1999). For this reason I intend to put a strong focus on the 'communitas' that takes place within the scene and discuss how and why older theories of 'rites of passage' may be used to good effect when describing the career paths of black metal scene members. Comparative analysis will be used where applicable, drawing very loosely on the work of Feld (1990) in order to analyze sound relating to social structure. Bauman and Briggs (1992 a.) work on genre, intertextuality and social power also lends substance to the concept of 'genre leaking' in order to understand the increasing degree of miscegenation taking place the between black metal and neo-nationalist skinhead scenes. These are two previously incompatible scenes whereby there were historically defined (In the UK and Ireland) as utterly opposed to one another, long hair versus shaved heads. But through the understanding of an internal logic oriented around musical themes based on blood soil and mythology a fusion and genre leaking has and is taking place (more so in central and eastern Europe than in the west), which is of wider relevance to anyone interested in the politics of interaction. Basically the stylistic discrepancies; long versus short hair, bomber jackets versus leather, football versus role-playing games, has been effaced through the shared interest in music that provides explicit references to a fantasy of mythic-historic community.

CHAPTER 2.

MORAL GAMES, NEO-TRIBAL HISTORY & THE HOSPITALITY CONTEST.

> In the twin union of play and culture, play is primary. It is an objectively
> recognizable, a concretely definable thing, whereas culture is only the term which
> our historical judgment attaches to a particular instance. (Huizinga 1955:46)

The main focus in this chapter shall be on; the usefulness of descriptive

terminology, types of neo-romantic historical consciousness in contemporary

subcultures/music scenes and the occurrence of 'play' (Huizinga 1955) in Serbian

hospitality. Particularly a performance of hospitality that takes account of black metal

scene values and the manner in which some of the tensions in the following interactions

can be understood as forms of 'play'. It is a common truism that when the face to face

experience of fieldwork/social interaction becomes translated into a document, a great

deal is lost. There is also the unfortunate tendency that even with the best of intentions the

original speech event is given a set of meanings that open it up to various interpretations

that were not intended. These are often a byproduct of the author/ethnographer attempting

to assert their authority over a subject/situation and despite the various deconstructions

and critiques engaged in since the publication of '*Writing Culture*' (Clifford & Marcus

1986), this dilemma has never been fully resolved. In the above quote by Huizinga, there

exists a capacity, not to efface the potential for misrepresentation, but to perhaps

understand representation and utterance in a more 'playful' manner. Especially in the

ethnographic vignettes that shall be explored in this chapter whereby statements that could

be read as vehemently political, were used in a way that is widely open to

misrepresentation when those statements become text. This is of particular relevance to any ethnography or anthropology of music scenes as these areas tend to fall under the gaze of sociology more often than anthropology. Therefore as a sociological object, the politics of music scenes is usually the area which is mined most heavily in terms of meaning and representation.

In many ways, black metal and other marginal subcultures produce the kinds of scene based habitus that occur as an outcome of the breakdown in and disaffection towards mainstream consensus. In light of the collapse of 'real socialism' in former Yugoslav countries (a term borrowed from a paper by Dr Rajko Mursic at EASA 2010), the processes of contemporary modernity present us with a bewildering array of lifestyle choices. Music scenes are a cogent example of these lifestyles as they have the potential to become so important (albeit often temporarily or in a liminal manner) that they reinterpret and supplant older forms of now redundant allegiances.

In some of Foucault's lectures (edited and published under the title '*Society Must Be Defended*') he discusses 'race war' (not racist war) amongst groups of people who self-identify through a commonality defined in opposition to a real or imagined form of domination/hegemony or a prevailing moral climate (2004). These ideas that are hinted at in Foucault's lectures but never fully elaborated upon will also be useful in this chapter in terms of trying to understanding the aforementioned social processes. What Foucault taps into here is a volkish organic sense of self-organizing identity that defines itself in an oppositional manner. For Foucault this pre-dated the scientific racism that blighted the the twentieth century.

> I think we should reserve the expression "racism" or "racist" discourse for something that is no more than a particular and localized episode in the great discourse of race war or race struggle. Racist discourse was really no more than an

episode, a phase, the reversal, or at least the reworking, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the discourse of race war. It was a reworking of that old discourse, which at that point was already hundreds of years old, in sociobiological terms, and it was reworked for the purposes of social conservatism and, at least in a certain number of cases, colonial domination... To situate the link and the difference between racist discourse and the discourse of race war, I was indeed praising the discourse of race war. I was praising it in the sense that I wanted to show you how-at least for a time, or in other words up to the end of the nineteenth century... This discourse functioned as a counter-history. (Foucault 2004:65-66)

In relating Foucault's ideas to a music scene, there is something similar taking place but on a much smaller scale. This is based on that way in which attitudes are intuited and acted upon spontaneously and in a performative fashion depending on context. Occasionally there are casual racist or fascistic statements made within the black metal scene but the analysis should not end there. When the propensity for play in the black metal scene is analyzed in light of Foucault's brief allusion to race as counter-history, a fuller picture emerges. As shall be presented in the the following analysis of interactions that occurred during my first visit to Serbia, but which have over the years been discussed, joked about and reinterpreted.

What's in a Name?

Despite the degree of debate over the propensity for concepts such as scene, subculture, genre, and other collective terms of address and affiliation; to fall in and out of favor, their utilitarian functionality always seems to triumph over arguments against criticizing their use as socio-cultural constructs (Hebdige 1983, the CCCS, Bennett & Kahn Harris 2004). Whilst some of the terms, particularly 'subculture' are now too contentious to use in relation to, or as a substitution for class, a sub-section of class, ethnicity (or as social category of persons grouped together out of a collection of shared

practices). Take for example, Henry Mayhew's (1987) description of the urban underclass in nineteenth century England, which depicted apprentices, thieves and prostitutes, as subcultures within society. At the time of publication Mayhew was able to address his educated readers who shared a consensus as to what constituted culture and society. However, in order to depict a world hidden in plain sight amongst society, the term subculture was highly appropriate because it facilitated helpful imaginary at a time when class mobility was particularly static.

Whilst these kinds of proto ethnography were a useful insight into marginal social groups, up until the backlash against subcultural studies in the late seventies and eighties, the terminology carried a good deal of stigma. The evolution of the term and its rehabilitation has been exhaustively documented elsewhere (Hebdige 1983, the CCCS, Bennett & Kahn Harris 2004). Fortunately, at this point, at least in the context of music scenes, the terms scene, subculture and genre are to some degree shorn of their ideological baggage, due to the extent to which members of music scenes themselves use those terms in a self-descriptive manner. Therefore, a term such as subculture is no longer understood to mean; a culture below an imagined normative culture, and as such is a useful collective, descriptive label. Whilst it is taken as a given that ethnic, and cultural homogeneity are no longer assumed, and given that the term culture itself has fallen out of anthropological parlance as of late (Clifford & Marcus 1986). The manner in which scene members use terms such as scene and subculture to describe their collectivities and activities affords the labels validity on a number of levels.

1.   The popular use of the terms mentioned above, means that there is less of an academic abstraction, as the terms share a common acceptance of usage both within scenes (etc.) and within the academic community.

2.   There is now a degree of consensus within the social sciences as the terms have become rehabilitated in musicological studies (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004).

3.   To seek a further abstraction in terms of finding suitable descriptive labels for popular music scenes is to add an unnecessary layer of interpretation (as is examined in the chapter 'The Gift & Collective Effervescence' which is based on Sontag's (1990) criticism of unnecessary layers of interpretation in art).

However, many of the terms, and descriptive labels mentioned above are most useful in terms of being 'handy' or 'sticky' with regards to labeling and with regards to sociological and musicological descriptions. Rather, for an anthropological examination of scene, subculture and practice, further analysis is needed if one wishes to avoid the circularity of 'identity' work. For example, the throw-away descriptions of phenomenon in which in which phrases such as 'this is part of THEIR identity' are bandied about. This kind of 'our identity-because it's our culture' circularity' is also taken up in a strategic manner by groups of people trying to articulate a practice or reasons for practices which 'mainstream' society misunderstands or disapproves of. This kind of thinking is most evident in the statement 'we do this because it is an essential part of OUR identity' and as such, it can be heard in an array of contexts, from Irish travellers, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, to Indigenous people's movements, and in some instances even soccer hooligans.

Photo taken from http://www.weirdthings.org.uk/football-hooligan-training-camp-for-kids/ accessed on 28/09/2010.

In the popular media these types of statement are often used in accordance with 'cultures of violence' reportage. It is often found in the discourse of groups such as Roma or Irish travellers articulating relationships of structural inequality in short sound bytes for popular consumption. But to delve past the sound bytes and identity-circularity descriptors, an understanding of the performative principle behind practices considered to be relevant or inherent to identity can reveal power, motivation and agency.

For the purposes of understanding the layers of contradiction, inherent in the Serbian black metal scene, and the degree to which theory (ideology and value) and practice (face to face social interaction) within the wider black metal scene often appear quite incompatible, treating the scene as a form of play(ful) performance can yield novel insights. The concept of a music scene being understood as a kind of performative play, allows for the possibility that the apparent contradictions and incompatibility actually do make sense. That the authors of misanthropic statements and creators of virulently nihilistic 'anti-human' music in fact have joyous and fulfilling social lives does not necessarily undermine or negate what is uttered in scenic discourse.

When trying to explain my fieldwork and thesis ideas to the folks back home during the early phases of research I was often asked, "surely if 'they' (my interlocutors)

are Satanists, they actually believe in God", or "if they are so misanthropic, why don't they just kill themselves and other people?"

In answer to the first statement, I used to resort to the comfortable catechism "well it's actually not so straightforward, many people within the scene are basically atheistic but are inspired by an ideology of Satanism". What I was trying to articulate at that point but couldn't quite understand myself, was the idea that these practices are basically forms of play.

There are stakes in this game, rules, conventions and codes in which seemingly contradictory statements are actually sensible when the rules of engagement are understood. In answer to the "misanthropy" questions, I sought to inject some black humor into my answers by stating that "actually within the black metal scene people do quite often kill others and themselves" and I would mention the suicides, murders and church burnings outlined in the introduction chapters of this thesis - but again I was slightly missing the point myself at the time.

Perhaps a better explanation of the misanthropic ethos of black metal is to again refer to the 'play' principle (as used by Huizinga 1955) in which during the early nineteen nineties, the nascent black metal scene was engaged in a form of violent one-upmanship. Challenges were issued each time a violent act was committed and the followers of the black metal scene in Bergen in particular kept responding; to the point where the violence simply became unsustainable. However it was this violence that effectively became the founding myth of the scene (the scene myth concept is explained further in the chapter entitled 'The Gift & Collective Effervescence') and a standard by which scene statements and discourse (verbal play) became judged for a prolonged period. Even in a society completely disintegrated by the collapse of all legal ties', (which could adequately reflect

the violence of the Bergen black metal scene and a core ethos that was observed in escalation).

> The innate desire to be first will still drive the power groups into collision and lead them into extremes of infatuation and frenzied megalomania…
> Bloody violence cannot be caught to any great extent in truly noble form; hence the game can only be experienced and enjoyed as a social and aesthetic fiction.
> (Huizinga 1955:101)

Therefore to a large extent the arson and murders associated with the black metal scene, in the 1990s have in fact become those 'aesthetic fictions' that Huizinga refers to. Hence a set of scenic values emerged in which typical taboos concerning extreme political rhetoric are translated into a form of escapism that defines the 'spirit' of black metal.

> That is why the spirit of society ever again seeks escape in fair imaginings of the life heroic, which is played out in the ideal sphere of honor, virtue, and beauty.
> (Huizinga 1955:101)

In this 'aesthetic fiction', an event (the destruction of Fantoft Stave Church) regarded as juvenile delinquency by some, can be celebrated as a heroic attack against Christianity in a 'society that seeks escape in the life heroic'. Although it is also worth pointing out that the destruction of Fantoft was not universally appreciated within the black metal scene and several artists spoke out against the destruction of their national heritage (musicians from the band Entombed in Sam Dunne's 2005 documentary).

Satanic Ludens.

In order to further explain the relevance of the play concept in music scenes a deeper discussion of the work '*Homo Ludens*' by Huizinga, (1955) is necessary. This will enable a refinement of theory in which attitudes and values rooted in the music scene being discussed, can be thought of as a form of 'free play' where ideologies are performed

in alter-political contexts. These 'scene' based attitudes have more of a performative dimension in comparison to 'mundane' attitudes and can be adopted and then simply negated according to context, as they do not have to make sense in accordance with logics external to the scene itself. A few quotes from Huizinga will summarize the thinking behind this statement more succinctly.

> Play can be deferred or suspended at any time. It is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty... Only when play is recognized as a cultural function-a rite, a ceremony-is it bound up with notions of obligation and duty... Here then we have the main characteristic of play: that it is free, is in fact freedom... A second characteristic is closely connected with this, namely that play is not "ordinary" or "real" life... Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. (Huizinga 1955:8)

This is an exceptionally flexible but utilitarian approach that can be used to understand the black metal music scene. Yet it also has wider implications for scholars seeking to reflexively highlight the role of authorship and voice in a narrative based piece of writing. The problems inherent in the politics of representation in ethnography have been well documented (Clifford & Marcus et al 1986). There is the potential when using Huizinga's concept of play as a motivating factor in human interaction, to bring in further de-centering styles of analysis in ethnographic types of writing. Bakhtin's (2004) depiction of characters in the novel or play taking on a voice/discourse or authorship of their own as opposed say Shakespeare's or Rabelais', hovers in the background. This is of particular relevance when thinking about the ontological anarchy of play as a principle of interaction.

> The living utterance having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness

around the given object of utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin 2004:276)

Huizinga maintains that 'pure play' is the basis of human civilisation and that the majority of human actions are governed not by a need for survival or other instincts, but by a 'play' instinct in which activities are bound by rules which differ a great deal from seemingly apparent social conventions (1955:6). In the years following the publication of '*Homo Ludens*' (Huizinga 1955), history, cultural theory, genetics, etc have all been vying with each other in order to further explain the basis of human behaviour(s) in accordance with relevant innovations in thought and technology. However, in the spirit of rehabilitating novel theories and approaches to the study of anthromusicology, Huizinga's ideas (1955); have found fertile ground in terms of their capacity to depict as rational, seemingly irrational music scene practices. The behaviours and strategies that orient around music scenes/subcultures are an area of human interaction in which this play aspect is exceptionally well developed. This is particularly pronounced in the case of so called 'extreme metal' scenes such as the black metal scene, because music a s a form of 'free play' also corresponds neatly with the categories of the mundane and the spectacular as outlined by Kahn-Harris (2007). This assertion is based on the premise that behavior which takes place within the context of 'the scene' (or identity based work oriented towards areas of scene based prestige maintenance) are similar to the manner in which Huizinga posits 'free play' as something that can be 'let down' in accordance to a particular situation (1955:6). As an example, one could think of a recreational card game, or a role playing game which may be postponed indefinitely, but then 'resumed' and continued with the same or even a different agenda or spirit (with spirit referring to an ethos or atmosphere in this context) (1955:6). This theory suits comparisons to people

engaged in conversations about music which can sometimes take the forms of tests and examinations of imagined attitudes based on a music fans tastes.

When I first begun living with Kozeljnik, the guitarist from The Stone and May Result, it quickly became apparent the degree to which we shared an appreciation of particular bands, both 'classic' and contemporary. In the mornings whilst drinking domaca (turska) kava (domestic or Turkish coffee) before leaving for work, Kozeljnik would often start the day with a daily routine of blasting the house with black metal music and then starting a conversation about the band. On one particular morning he played a CD that I was unfamiliar with and asked me did I know who it was, when I looked at him with my head tilted in a 'whose this' gesture (I am generally a bit slow until the kava kicks in, therefore gestures were all I could manage). Kozeljnik's response took the form of a good natured scolding as if I was a pupil who had failed to do his homework, "you don't recognize this", "are you sure", "listen carefully"?

I could almost but not quite guess the band on this occasion, I knew it was something Norwegian from the early nineties, but I gave up and asked "ok who is it"?

Kozeljnik playfully chided, "it's Immortal, how can you not get this", "haha minus points for you today mister Dave"! The walk into work that day, then became a discussion about the band Immortal, whose sound I have since grown to love but whose embarrassingly cheesy album covers (see below) were the original reason as to why I never became a fan.

Immortal promo picture, taken from

'Play' As Aggressive Hospitality.

Although both 'play' as understood by Huizinga (1955), and a persons 'scene'
identity as a black metaller comprise many aspects of their everyday life, or the
'mundane' (Kahn-Harris 2007), these aspects are 'neither imposed by physical necessity
or moral duty. They are aspects that can be performed at leisure (Huizinga 1955:6). So in
a seemingly secular or alter-political context such as the black metal scene, one of the
primary means by which members maintain and contribute to their scene, outside of the
typical activities such as recording and performing music. Is through the act of rendering
explicitly spectacular and therefore potentially sacred, behaviors and pronouncements

which fall under the category of play, and which as Huizinga maintains can contribute to the well being of the group (1955:9). This makes aspects of the mundane; ceremonious, a verbal form of potlatch similar to Huizinga's analysis of Boas (1955:60).

> The mental world of honor, pomp, braggadocio, and challenge. The performers dwell in the realms of chivalry and heroism, where illustrious names and coats of arms and splendid lineages bulk large, this is not the ordinary world of toil and care, the calculation of advantage or the acquisition of useful goods. Aspiration here turns to the esteem of the group, a higher rank, marks of superiority. The mutual relations and obligations of the two phratriai of the Tlinkit are expressed by a word which means "showing respect". These relations are continually turned into actual deeds by an exchange of services and presents…In brief the potlatch spirit is akin to the thoughts and feelings of the adolescent. (Huizinga 1955:60)

This alludes to the living fantasy/imagined community aspect that strongly defined subcultures such as black metal exhibit. The extended liminality in which success and prestige, even viable and sometimes relatively prosperous careers can be engaged in to make the fantasy of the scene and the closeness of its connection more vivid and meaningful.

When I recently read Huizinga's thesis on play, it reminded me of my first trip to Serbia, and the time when I first met members of the Novi Sad horde. At this point I was trying to learn as much as possible about Slavic black metal and its occasional tolerance of intolerance. At the time I still found this slightly shocking, due to the scenes overt flirtation with extreme right wing ideologies. Veljko, a former vocalist for the band Wolfs Hunger, was engaged in what could be understood as a kind performative 'play' during our first meeting. He used this occasion to make various radical pronouncements which served to enhance his status amongst a group of peers, which included Urok from The Stone, Veliki Marko and Chaki (who is currently the vocalist and main member of Wolfs Hunger). As will be mentioned again in the chapter 'At the Heart of Europe', this was one

of those meetings in which questions and declarations of interest in particular bands, provided an exploration into personal values understood within the context of a 'scene' identity. But they can also be read as part of the 'verbal potlatch' alluded to earlier. The following is an account of that first meeting in 2006 based on fieldnotes and recollection, but also informed by remembered conversations about that meeting in the years that followed.

Veljko from Wolf's Hunger arrived at the beer cellar we were drinking in, wearing a Darkthrone hoodie and combat shorts. At the time (summer 2006) he was twenty years of age with a shaved head, dark features and the muscular physique of someone who practices martial arts. I remember noting in my fieldnotes that there was something very wolfish about his appearance and he exuded a tense charismatic energy that affected his speech and gestures. This energy also manifested as an aggressive, interrogatory and challenging sense of hospitality, I had a sense that this guy wants to keep me on my toes and let me know that he is tough but friendly. But despite the bravado he is much smarter than a typical 'angry young skinhead looking to start a fight' (and I have met a few of those over the past few years). Veljko is also a keen and thoughtful listener. I liked him immediately and got a sense that this kind of posturing is also an indicator of someone who is extremely loyal to his friends, opinionated and in many ways at ease with his own contradictions.

Throughout our conversation Veljko made the kind of statements and declarations of interest in bands, that would position him as extremely right-wing and patriotic. Whilst at the same time he was skillfully playing the game of representing Wolfs Hunger as a non-political band. This was done in a manner similar to that used by Fenriz of the Norwegian band Darkthrone (Kahn-Harris 2004), who was known to make seemingly

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fascistic statements but then situate them within the context of 'art' (the spectacular) and not politics (the mundane). I asked Veljko if there was ever any violence at gigs and he replied that sometimes ANTIFA (an anti-fascist action group) cause trouble: "at one concert 50 SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) skinheads turned up at a gig and started threatening us". "There was only nine of us and we said yeah we're nazi skins, what are you going to do about it?" Veljko said they just "fucked off then and nothing happened".

Veljko stated that he has a lot of friends who are NS (nazi skinheads) and he is into 'white power oi' bands such as Skrewdriver (one of the most famous RAC Rock Against Communism, white power bands from the UK). At this point I was feeling quite at ease with our conversation and starting to understand the spirit of the challenges being laid down by Veljko. Knowing that I was an anthropology student, from Ireland, and the fact that I obviously was not as well informed about the NS bands that Veljko was talking about, the category of NS was the stake in the 'play' of this conversation. Coupled with the fact that I was an outsider who had only just arrived in Serbia, the challenge partly consisted of seeing whether or not I would respond in a 'politically correct' manner and criticize Veljko's 'scene' politics. Based on my body language and lack of knowledge it was obvious that I did not share the same 'scene' ideologies. To pretend that I did would obviously be false and unethical from a research point of view, but based on the fact that I was beginning to really warm to this guy, I wasn't prepared to either accept or contest his challenge in a pointlessly argumentative manner. The reason being, that this challenge and 'play' was also an invitation of friendship and hospitality, the terms of which were being exaggerated, but which were also based on a growing sense of mutual trust.

So I shook my head as I put down my beer, made eye contact with Veljko and stated; "I fuckin hate Skrewdriver they're a bunch of arseholes". Veljko and the guys looked slightly shocked but tried not to show a strong reaction, perhaps expecting me to follow this statement with something 'politically correct'. However my dislike of Skrewdriver had nothing to do with their dodgy BNP (British National Front) politics. I then explained to Veljko that I hated them because of a violent incident that happened in London when I was sixteen. At the time I was hanging around at the monument in Piccadilly square with a group of older punks and skinheads. One of the skinheads was repeatedly playing the song 'smash the IRA' on a stereo and when I complained a fight broke out and although not particularly serious I came out slightly the worse from it. So I explained that ever since then "I just hate the bastards" (Skrewdriver) "because of that prick in London".

After telling Veljko this story, the tone of our conversation changed, the tense excitement that fueled Veljko's previous statements receded slightly and there was (temporarily) less of a sense that he had something to prove in our further conversations. Whatever 'play' had been instigated at the beginning of our meeting had changed or been 'put down' as mentioned by Huizinga (1955:6). For the period following my story about Skrewdriver our conversations became more relaxed, and Veljko also allowed the others to talk much more freely, acting less like a gatekeeper or stranger-handler.

In following up the story I also mentioned that Skrewdriver, regardless of what their music sounds like, have little or no following in the Republic of Ireland as most of their fans would be loyalist skinheads. Veljko then asked about the IRA and the political situation in the north of Ireland. I think he had been expecting me to express sympathy for the IRA, and I explained that I probably would have been sympathetic to the cause as a

young teenager but now things were changed utterly, and "last year I read some stuff about the North that really changed my point of view". I then told Veljko and the guys about the social conditions in Northern Ireland that gave rise to paramilitary groups and how the romantic image that many people have of the IRA and Protestant paramilitaries as freedom fighters is something quite different to the social reality. I told them about smuggling, drug dealing, punishment beatings and the 1998 Omagh bombings. We also discussed urban deprivation in Belfast and loyalist collusion amongst the police forces.

During these conversations which were quite serious in tone as the play aspect of the conversation had been put down once music was no longer on the agenda, Veljko listened carefully and responded intelligently. In response he asked a lot of questions, as opposed to making ideological pronouncements, which was something that happened with other NS skinheads I met later whilst living in Serbia. Upon reflection, this instance in the conversation I have just described, demonstrates the flexibility of 'free play' and the degree to which tone and interaction, as opposed to political ideology dictated the extent to which we each engaged in play. Whilst discussing scene related issues, music and personal biography; the radical pronouncements were 'free flowing', yet when the tone of the conversation changed towards actual (mundane) politics, 'play was put aside' only to be resumed when a suitably 'play' oriented subject cropped up again (Huizinga 1955:9). This is where the lineages, esteem, heroism of the fantasy which constitutes the back story of a music scene are revealed as something akin to the verbal potlatch mentioned earlier. The sense of verbal potlatch is one in which prestige is up for grabs through the deployment of scenic knowledge, but also through the verbal sparring and sacrificing of ones position in order to achieve consensus. The stories of deeds, ands coats of arms are also substituted for random acts of violence that can be boasted about and oriented in

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relation to connections to music. These are some of the bonds of commonality that casually unite scene members based on non-utilitarian exchange, instead of goods and services etc. friendship and hospitality are negotiated.

The instance in which another bout of the 'play' element did emerge once more, was when I told Veljko about a gig I had attended at SKC (a remnant/relic of the old Communist, youth community centers) in Beograd. I mentioned a band that impressed me, an up and coming Serbian reggae/thrash metal fusion band called Eyesburn. The volume and tone of the conversation became louder again and Veljko said that he doesn't like reggae, he sees it as "something foreign" that he's just "not into", "why would Serbs want to play that shit?" Veljko continued in this vein explaining that Eyesburn were once a really good thrash (metal) band but now they play "all this other shit".

This is a cogent example of the play element incorporating several distinct tropes in this first meeting. Veljko was keen to display a sense of hospitality, especially considering his performance of the 'proud Serb host', identity. But at the same time his scene identity required a toughness which showed that he was tolerating my interest in Eyesburn as a Serbian band, but at the same time demonstrating his dislike of their 'foreign' sound.

However this time it was Veljko who avoided any kind of awkward silence or unfriendliness by changing the subject and saying that he loves traditional Irish music and mentioned the Orthodox Celts and Irish Stew (two popular bands from Serbia who play Pogues inspired Irish folk rock). Here the play element in the conversation was oscillating between friendly and hostile, as each radical or potentially hostile statement was made, the prospect of a rude impression being formed on my part was nullified but a further friendly remark that displayed further commonality between us. This also signifies the

verbal potlatch aspect of the exchange, another offering was made which enhanced Veljko's status and allowed the conversation to flow comfortably.

In the same breath Veljko both praised traditional Irish music, but at the same time derided all those people who wore green and pretended to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day. Again something was given away, but strategically, and not too much at once. So whilst this interaction could easily have been misinterpreted as guarded, unfriendly or at least schizophrenic. An understanding of the play element and verbal potlatch has facilitated a description in which the camaraderie, fun and emotion of the event has been approached, and the write-up is one in which the transformation from event to text is has not lapsed too far into abstraction.

In Praise of Race War?

In "*Society Must Be Defended"* a collection of Foucault's (2004) lectures, he discusses the concept of race war functioning as a counter-historical discourse. Firstly by defining historical discourse, as the "discourse of historians, or this practice of recounting history" which was "for a long time what it had no doubt been in antiquity and what it still was in the middle ages", "related to the rituals of power" (2004: 66). Foucault elaborates on this by stating that "we can understand the discourse of the historian to be a sort of ceremony, oral or written, that must in reality produce both a justification of power and a re-enforcement of that power", "to speak the right of power and to intensify the luster of power (2004:66). In his questioning praise of 'race war or race struggle' Foucault separates these categories from those of racist war and racist discourse, but also points out that these were "no more than an episode at the end of the nineteenth century", "at which point it turned into racist discourse. Foucault elaborates on the concept of race war by

pointing out the tendency of forms of historicism (even the volkish type) to entwine with sources of legalistic and dynamistic power. How, for a long period in European history, monarchic dynasties, tended to in fact be 'foreign' in terms of their genealogies, marriage patterns, customs and even languages. Anderson also reminds us of the top-down manifestation of this in "*Imagined Communities*"(2006). There was a revealing moment in European history towards the end of the nineteenth century when in response to changes in society and the upsurge in romantic nationalist movements, European monarchies did eventually appear in 'national drag'. Hobsbawm and Ranger also eluded to this their work on the "*Invention of Tradition*", whereby tartan and other national costumes are 'invented' or if orchestrated convincingly enough; one could say cemented (into) the national consciousness of various nation states (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

> Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.... However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situ-ations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983:1f)

Within the black metal scene there are echoes of these counter-historical tendencies, which also mirror the trend towards micro, as opposed to macro, histories. Claiming special knowledge, historical pedigree, volkish custom etc. in a music scene could be said to function as a macro version of traditional historicism's tendency to "speak of the right of power and add luster to power" (Foucault 2004:66). Given the emphasis on blood soil and mythology in black metal and its privileging of these elements in a volkish manner, the time needed to establish a tradition in music is a much shorter

one. These forms of bricolage in straight-forward black metal are important and inform the scene, but in Pagan and NS (national socialist) black metal they increasingly define the genre and impose limits on the conditions of possibility for what is and is not acceptable within the scene..

Understood in this light, Veljko's previous statements can be interpreted another way. They are a conversational technique that imposes limits, sets out boundaries and negotiates what may be discussed. Given that authenticity is derived from extremity, proximity to violence and a wallowing in taboo forms of nationalism, anything which threatens miscegenation in the scene, (such as a Serbian metal band playing reggae) is rendered taboo within the black metal scene for a number of reasons. First is the mixing of genres, black metal does this quite a bit in terms of sound structure and occasionally ethos (see chapter on The Gift & Collective Effervescence), but this is always underpinned with reference to either Satanism or the volk mythology of a band's place of origin. Therefore it is the 'borrowing of something from another place that is not your own', which is taboo in this instance, and not the actual foreign-ness of the reggae.

In an article by Saris (in press) entitled "*Revisiting "Culture, Genuine and Spurious": Reflections on Icons and Politics in Ireland*" the concept of authenticity as it has been defined at various instances is succinctly summarized as

> Living "authentically" – being true to oneself… a concern for human relationships within different collectivities… a concern about the types and qualities of connections between individuals… The assumption was of course, that face-to-face relations, "natural" ties to kin and home and land, perhaps especially their larger analogues at the level of the nation state were fraying or even disappearing under the relentless individuation of subjects in modernity. (Saris in press)

The above summation touches upon many of the concerns and tensions existing around the concept of authenticity within music scenes in general. However these tensions

regarding face-to-face relations and the family have been re-imagined through the

reflexive construction and shaping of the black metal scene or it could also be called a

community in this instance. Membership is much more fluid than typical family structures

but nonetheless the bonds of friendship and reciprocity within the Serbian scene have

quite often overlapped been substituted with and replicated the bonds of family. Yet

technology too plays a role and market forces are awkwardly present in the composition

of this scene. Artifacts must be traded and circuits of commerce have been traced around

Europe by bands and individuals. Saris has described the role of Irish cultural artifacts in

the self-construction projects of the Irish middle classes (in press:11). Within the

discussion with Veljko outlined above, this concern with both scene and Serbian

authenticity was hugely present and not untypical of many subsequent conversations that

took place throughout my time in Serbia. So although music scenes are a thing of the

market and the imagined community, to perceive them as somehow falsely manufactured

or forms of false consciousness would be to apply to puritanical an interpretation upon

music scenes. A further quote from Saris neatly captures the enmeshing of market forces

and personal/communal creativity those modern web-linked scenes posses.

> The ability to be incorporated into that sort of self-fashioning that we refer to as
> taste and style also becomes a political assertion of control against something that
> is experienced as coming from the outside. (Saris in press:11)

I have used reggae here as an example, and although this is a discussion of one

short utterance, the views here are based on a wider scene ethos that became apparent

through prolonged fieldwork. To illustrate this point further; many people within the

Serbian black metal scene are fans of folk music from Ireland and other countries, but

there is generally a sometimes light-hearted, sometimes serious, sense of derision expressed towards bands that play folk music from other countries.

To get back to the idea of counter-historicism, or counter-imaginaries within music scenes, the use of volkish themes lend the scene, at least in the eyes of those who subscribe to it, a veneer of historical legitimacy which gives the music a sense of permanence. This sense of permanence allows some within the scene to use their knowledge of the music, as a repertoire of volkish authority that seeks to go beyond youthful purpose, even before; 'classic' metal/rock status has been achieved. These status changes in music also follow this trajectory and serve similar purpose, creating a canon of knowledge that has the power to define through taste and habitus. Here history is used to venerate and give luster, but in an individualistic manner, instead of being deployed institutionally as in the use of history by powerful elites. The knowledge of a romanticized past is deployed by bands and individuals in order to imagine transcendental linkages. Historicism through sound and ethos in black metal also manages to bypass the political apathy and the sense of disconnect towards contemporary modernity by tapping into the desire for a powerful collective identity. This is the 'political assertion of control' that Saris talks about (in press:11). This gives the scenes mythic-historicism a powerful resonance if it is accepted that definitive sources of identity are no longer found within tradition and the nation-state; or in some cases even in the surrounding community and family. It is individualized on a number of levels, within the black metal scene there are various types of consensus that hold it together. However these vary from person to person and change across the different generations I spoke to.

In Foucault's lectures (2004) this is the sense of identity that allows a section of people inhabiting a land, to identify first with each other, and secondly in anger towards

an enduring and strangely internal form of colonialism. It is in a number of ways the same as that bond which unites people through real and imagined shared languages and cultures in Anderson's (2006) "*Imagined Communities*" (in the case of England, being ruled by dynasties of Norman origin mixed with German and Russian etc). The people had for a moment in time a chance to self-identify with each other through blood and soil and in doing so identify those on the throne as illegitimate. This was one of those periods of rupture in which history being the praise of Rome, that which adds luster to power ceased to function as such for a time. As Foucault defines it:

> The introduction of a new subject of history… historical narrative acquires a new domain of objects, and in the sense that a new subject begins to speak in history. History is no longer the state talking about itself, and the something else that speaks in history and takes itself as the object of its own historical narrative is a sort of new entity known as the nation… a nation that generates or gives rise to notions like nationality, race and class. (Foucault 2004:142)

At least until that moment of the monarchies adopting the 'national drag' and in this succinct image provided by Anderson we are reminded of the staged nature of the monarchy, dressing to impress, but also of a man donning female costume and daubing his face with make up. In this temporary glimpse behind the scenes, authenticity is shattered and the luster of power suddenly fades. Until of course this morphs into the nation state entity in which subjects become the object of the gaze of the state and the site of engineering in terms of sex, health and state racism.

The examples above apply more specifically to long term historical processes, but what makes scenes so interesting, is that they are often macro versions of these wider processes. The same tensions that exist in terms of the regulation of bodies, who is allowed to do what with whom, are engaged with but in a playful but serious manner. Therefore in trying to maintain a so-called alternative scene such as black metal, bands

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from more 'mainstream' scenes are in a sense threatening when a metal sound is fused with something which to black metal fans, is as jarringly foreign as reggae. The 'matter out of place' is even to obvious an analogy for this phenomenon, so instead Foucault (2004) shall be mined further in order to discuss the use of volkishness as a repertoire of power.

> History is the discourse of power, the discourse of the obligations power uses to subjugate it; it is also the dazzling discourse that power uses to fascinate, terrorize, and immobilize. In a word, power both binds and immobilizes and is both the founder and guarantor of order. (Foucault 2004:68).

These capacities of power are the wider manifestation of similar capacities in music and art (see chapter on the Gift & Collective Effervescence), which have the power to bind a group of people, to dazzle, to produce spectacle, to impose a shared sense of order and negotiate consensus. However to add a historical or counter-historical aspect to the music, is (to the initiated) to absolutely bind the scene. Or to use Bennett's (2006) epithet, the 'neo-tribe', is forged into something akin to a movement, albeit a small one which is then lent the veneer of something more timeless. Of course, volkish sentiment alone are not enough to allow a band to succeed and 'dazzle', it must be coupled with a degree of charisma and originality in order to be recognized as 'kvlt' but again this is not dissimilar to the tensions underlying the desire for authenticity as a category mentioned earlier.

In thinking of these aspects, I am reminded of the first time that I witnessed the band Wolfs Hunger playing live at United Slavic Swords festival in 2006. At this point Veljko was still the lead singer and guitarist. He has since 2008 cut off contact with the continuing band members and has disappeared in mysterious circumstances that I have

been variously informed could either be trouble with the law, military service or domestic bliss with his girlfriend.

WOLFS HUNGER AT UNITED SLAVIC SWORDS 2006.

The following section is based on notes taken at and after the United Slavic Swords festival in the winter of 2006.

There was only a short interval before Wolfs Hunger took to the stage, and the crowd seemed to fill out. The maniacs from Banja Luka came forward to the centre of the crowd in front carrying a flag and chugging back cans of the highly prized local beer, called nectar. There were lots of screams and most of the people in front of the stage raised the sign of the horns in salute to the band. Veljko spoke to the audience quite a bit, introducing most of the songs with a meaningful preamble and interacting brilliantly with his audience. Each song was announced in a passionate speech that spelt out the context and subject of the song, each one a warning to Serbia's enemies and a celebration of ancient and contemporary battles.

In person Veljko is highly charismatic with an energetic violence to his hospitality and interactions with people. Onstage these attributes are magnified tenfold and he easily gains a tight hold over his fans. I kept thinking, he's lucky he has found an outlet for this kind of energy. Under different circumstances this kind of charisma would easily lead men into battle.

As soon as the band play their first song the crowd goes wild, erupting into a furious mosh pit, with the huge guys from Banja Luka at the centre throwing people around with ease. Unlike the other bands at United Slavic Swords, Wolfs Hunger do not wear any corpsepaint and although Caslav plays to the crowd and sings some of the vocals it is Veljko who is the natural frontman, whether he is singing or not. When Caslav and the other guitarist are playing they pace around quite a bit, hunching over their guitars waving them like guns, grimacing and reacting emotionally to the music they are playing. Veljko in contrast tends to face the crowd a lot more and keeps his head raised as he is playing. The

microphone stand is positioned in such a way the he has to keep his head raised upwards as he sings, kind of similar to the stance used by Lemmy from the band Motorhead. Veljko's face is a storm of emotions as he sings about Serbian history and mythology, blending epic battles and betrayals of the past with a 'fuck the world' energetic venom.

 (Wolfs Hunger at United Slavic Swords 2006, Veljko and Chaki, photo taken by author).

With Wolf's Hunger there is not much emphasis on grimness or misanthropic performance, the thrash metal elements of their performance lend the band a great deal of emotional diversity which to me suggests that they have the potential to do very well even outside of the black metal scene.
Each time they play a song from their split album with Postmrtna Liturgija, it is very well received and this appreciation is also reciprocated by Veljko who thanks the audience and the people who came from Republika Srpska, Novi Sad and Irska. Next they play their most violent and rousing anthem; '*Fuck the*

Peace' and the whole crowd sings along, chanting "fuck the peace, enjoy this
war", as a furious mosh pit breaks out..

Their final song, which was sung in English is about the Battle of Kosovo (Field
of the Blackbirds) and is perhaps the most moving of the entire set. Even though
it is a new song and probably hasn't been heard by many people it captivated the
audience. The singing was clean and easy to understand and the choruses had an
anthem like quality that suited the mythic-historical themes being sung about.
Veljko's facial expression was so passionate and intense that one could almost
imagine that the battle of Kosovo had been fought yesterday.

In many ways this serves as an example of the way in which some people within
the Serbian metal scene have claimed an alternative ownership of history. Although this
history is managed and celebrated in a volkish way, it orients itself back to the imagined
'epic traditions'. However it has been forced out of one genre and reinvented to attend to
present needs and conventions, in this case blending the discourse of historical warfare,
into an expression of disgust and anger at the conduct of the most recent wars. Especially
present in this genre of Serbian black metal is the theme of Serbia having been betrayed,
and that betrayal is a danger to all of Europe. This theme came up again in the online
artwork of the black metal scene a few years later with the secession of Kosovo, in which
the secession was depicted as an unleashing of Pandora's box (see image below). Yet
although the secession of Kosovo was a deeply emotive issue, there was a sense of
finality and fatalism towards its separation. A few of the people who spoke on the matter,
whilst they were vehemently against the separation, were even more against the idea of
another prolonged conflict. One interlocutor said, "this is bad, the way the politicians are
speaking is like a return to the bad days… and yes it is shit but we must not go back to
that". The images below scanned from online myspace.com profiles capture some of the

sentiments at the time. The use of the internet and the role of online participation in the

black metal music scene will be discussed in the following chapter.

(Images scanned by author from myspace members pages, identities withheld).

CHAPTER 3.

Bedroom Culture and the Joys of Hatred: The Internet, Collecting, Bypassing Censorship,and the Escalation of 'Extremity' in Black Metal.

This chapter explores some of the meanings behinds certain styles, utterances and use of the internet within the Serbian black metal scene. Sian Lincoln's work (2004) addressing the gender bias of earlier subcultural studies shall be used to draw attention to specific zones and spheres (private, feminine spaces) that in the past had been overlooked due to the focus on street and night-club scenes. The increase of youth autonomy and privacy enhancing technology (internet, personal music players etc.) has played an important role in the escalation of 'extreme' texts, artwork and music over the past few decades. This chapter will attempt to trace some of the connections between various forms of media, communication and discourse within the wider black metal scene and then through some specific examples from Serbia.

Within the chat-rooms and web profiles of black metal fans, misanthropic pronouncements and ideas circulate that few if any people would ever articulate in a face to face context. The use of sound, image and text on many myspace.com profiles are transformed into extremely elaborate and time consuming productions of idealized self-identities. During a period in 2007 when I was spending a lot of time online and trying to understand people's use of social networking sites in relation to the black metal scene, I noticed a post from Russian myspace.com user who regularly left comments on The

Stone's profile page. It transpired that she was using her myspace.com account in order to depict her real or imaginary suicide.

(Comment posted on the myspace.com profile page of The Stone accessed on 14/10/2007).

WE LEAVE THIS LIFE…TOMORROW NIGHT ALL WILL BE…END!!

SISTERS, BROTHERS, FRIENDS, MORONS, POSERS….

WE'RE GOING TO BETTER AND WAY DARKER PLACE THAN THIS SHITTY LIFE IS… YOU CAN SEE OUR PROFILE UNTIL TOMORROW MIDNIGHT…

AFTER THAT…

NO MORE…

NEVER!

MY BODY FOR SATAN …GO TO MEET ALMIGHTY FATHER OF HELL! FINALLY!

SOME OF YOU WERE GREAT PERSONS, FRIENDS…BUT MOSTLY YOU WERE JUST…POOR ,WEAK SOULS…

DIE PROUDLY AT LEAST!

THAT'S IT,

AVE SATAN!

SATAN, COME TO US!!!!!!!!!!!!

When I spoke to Urok, who normally answers the comments on The Stone's

myspace.com page, he said that he really didn't know if the suicide note was real or fake

but that the person was always leaving "totally crazy comments and pictures". It may be

the case that this user had simply decided to stop using her profile on myspace.com or had

created another profile/project and therefore chose the format of a suicide note as a spectacular climax to her online persona. Alternatively the suicide note may be something much more unfortunate and represent a genuine suicide/attempt. None of my informants on myspace.com were able to shed any light on the matter.

Dark Spaces and Secret Projects.

> The concept of 'bedroom culture' (Mc Robbie: 1978) first emerged as a response to traditional youth research conducted by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the late 1970s (see Cohen 1972, Clarke 1976, Hall & Jefferson 1976, Willis 1977, Hebdige 1983). Primarily, this concept was developed as a means of addressing the alternative ways in which girls organize their cultural lives, and to account for their absence from street based, male dominated youth cultural activities. (Lincoln 2004:94)

Lincoln's research examines the concept of bedroom culture and utilizes and refines notions of boundedness, membership, style and attitude in order to demonstrate the increased fluidity and interaction between public and private spheres. Within the subtext of these types of analysis is a commentary on the decreasing amount of direct face-to-face time that many people are spending together. This time is increasingly substituted with time spent online; creating (identity work) and interacting using web profiles that facilitate an idealized fantasy of the self that is much less regulated by the dictates of conventional behavior. Although it must be borne in mind that this chapter is more of a reflection upon a technology usage at a particular moment in time, as opposed to an attempt at a general empirically determined theory of internet use. In general internet usage patterns and social networking technology is changing so quickly that any attempts to reach definite conclusions about their motivations and possibilities may be out of date as soon as a phenomenon has been described.

In Lincoln's (2004) research, talk, objects, customs and practices are all discussed in relation to the bedroom and in terms of the boundedness of the bedroom as a physical-conceptual sphere in which the practices discussed gain most relevance. However it wouldn't be stretching Lincoln's thesis too far to ascribe some of the criteria she uses to define domestic spaces in terms of zones; to web profiles and online social networks, as this has during the past few years become one of the predominant bedroom activities for many teenagers. With the possibilities for interaction inherent in the iphone and web enabled mobile phones, handsets and netbooks etc. this technology has become extremely pervasive, occupying a level of attention that ten years ago may have been reserved for TV, reading and music and chatting on the phone or in person.

At the time of the beginning of the fieldwork for this thesis, the technology was not quite as pervasive and a common tabloidesque critique of these genres concerned with online socializing was that they caused users to ignore their immediate neighbors in favor of someone halfway across the world. Therefore I was surprised on my first meeting with a group of black metal fans in Beograd to find that after spending the evening talking and drinking in a cafe, that later that night (using the yumetalforum.net), most of the same individuals who had met previously were continuing their conversation online. With regard to other black metal fans in Serbia this has also been articulated as a common activity, "listening to music, watching youtube.com and chatting to friends". Online chat has in some contexts replaced telephone chat, as it is less expensive for people and facilitates more privacy than using a land-line telephone. Online communication also has the benefit of allowing communication to take place between clusters of individuals and in this way the sense of togetherness that was achieved earlier in the cafe can be replicated online.

The work of McRobbie (who provided a significant redress to the male centered imbalance of earlier subcultural studies) (1978) on which Lincoln is basing some of her findings, posits 'codes' as the conceptual means through which young women's cultural ideas were integrated. This corresponds also to rise in online interaction as an increasingly important site of scene specific enculturation and a powerful medium through which heteroglossic language acquires its power to define behavior based on the dictates and conditions of possibility within particular subcultures. This power is based on the coding of utterances deemed suitable for scene specific discourses. Or to rephrase it simply; who gets to do and say and wear what, the organizing of attention and the construction of habitus.

In Lincoln's work on teenage girls, she states that these 'codes' are derived from the teenage fantasy worlds in which fashion, beauty, romance magazines and music were the main modes of cultural transmission (2004). Within the black metal scene these codes are substituted with music websites and band profiles that serve as the bricoleur component of identity work, in the same way that T-shirts, safety pins, nazi armbands and anarchy symbols served as physical visible markers of belonging and identification to the punk subculture. Simultaneously and quite deliberately these codes act as symbols of misidentification within the wider mainstream/mundane culture.

(Siouxsie Sue with Nazi armband

http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/punkthe.htm accessed on 06/05/09).

In terms of deliberate provocation and misidentification, the image above of punk chanteuse Siouxsie Sue is a cogent example of the desire to utilize an aesthetic that simultaneously reviles and satirizes a hegemonic principle that is being contested through the aesthetics of a music scene. Siousxie Sue was vehemently against Nazism however she wore the swastika as a provocative gesture towards what she perceived as mainstream conservatism (although a less politicized reading of this might find that it was done in order to annoy Bernard Rhodes who managed The Clash). In this case the Nazis were emblematic of anti-freedom/personal expression and individualism. They represented a version of narrow-mindedness, and ultimately nihilistic conformity, whilst at the same time the fascistically inspired uniforms, S&M bondage styles and fashions that some punks wore, were an attempt to mock that conservatism by highlighting the most extreme examples of it. Within black metal this also takes place but to a much lesser and more invisible degree. The everyday clothes of people within the Serbian black metal scene, blend in and are much more acceptable (even to this day) than the lurid and eye-catching styles worn by some punks. Therefore the zones and codes are less visible and as such not designed to outwardly shock in the same manner as punks' confrontational dress style. More often than not the T-shirts and badges worn by metal fans are a (occult) coded style statement directed towards those within the metal scene, and used as a means of differentiating allegiance to sub-genres within the overall metal scene. The work of Lefebvre on zoning is also cited by Lincoln in order to expand on the meanings informing the manner in which young people assemble and display collections of artifacts and biographical objects. In this manner Lincoln (2004) takes into account, social and

technological changes and innovations, in order to challenge the idea that these codes construct or represent bounded spaces. In terms of the relevance to the black metal scene, these zones and codes are easier understood as rules, conventions, and aesthetics; that are reflexively practiced and transgressed.

Although the notion of unbounded codes, spaces, memberships and attitudes is suitable for the subjects Lincoln describes. Based on the pronounced stylistic promiscuity of modern subcultures, and with regards to the black metal scene in Beograd and Novi Sad, stylistic promiscuity (unusually for a contemporary music scene) is much less pronounced. In some aspects black metal and a few other sub-genres of heavy metal have more in common with older subcultures from the nineteen sixties seventies and eighties, whereby allegiance to a specific style was more firmly adhered to. Whereas many of the subcultures that have developed during the same time frame as black metal, are characterized by highly overt stylistic borrowings and miscegenation between different genres (ie. nu-metal which fuses hip-hop, hardcore and heavy metal, or emo which fuses punk sounds with emotional themes usually heard in Morrissey/Smiths albums or within the grunge scene).

The people involved in the black metal scene are deeply reflexive in terms of appearance, style and codes. A good deal of time and effort goes into maintaining an orthodox black metal image, through observance of dress styles, hair style and behavior. Even when individuals do adopt styles that do not conform to genre orthodoxies, this is done in a reflexive manner that draws attention to the transgression, as opposed to it simply being adopted in an unproblematic manner typical of stylistic promiscuity.

Where subcultures do happen to 'leak' into each other, on web profiles or through social practice, there is a covert subcultural logic in operation and a knowledge that a

transgression is being made. For example a girl nicknamed Smorok (Serbian for Shamrock) who regularly hung out at Mordor record shop (where Kozeljnik of The Stone/May Result worked in 2007), had commissioned some T-shirts of The Stone from a small print shop in Beograd. With the exception of her own T-shirt all of the other T-shirts were printed using white ink on black cotton, but for herself Smorok decided to have her version of The Stone's logo printed onto a pink T-shirt. Normally Smorok would wear dark clothes and styles fairly typical of black metal, but in this one instance she decided "to make a joke, and have the only Stone T-shirt in pink", saying "haha it will really piss the guys off", "but this is just a joke and I would not normally wear pink". So although Smorok was deliberately mixing styles, the reflexivity and knowledge that she displayed with regards to the transgression and her statement of deliberate intent, effectively sought to nullify or ironize the transgressive aspect of her actions.

Alchemical Privacy and Bypassing the Gaze.

In 1976 the Sex Pistols were widely regarded (whether correctly or not) as having changed the nature of rock music by emphasizing style and attitude over musical competence. Their brash DIY ethic paved the way for many people to form bands, based on ideas and attitudes rather than talent and musical ability. Within the black metal scene there occurred an interesting inversion of these previous seismic shifts in music. Due to the development of computer based recoding and sampling technology, and the use of the internet to distribute and market underground music directly to fans. New ways of sustaining music scenes, and outlets for identity based forms of creativity came into being. These new cyber technologies enabled users to bypass the kinds of media and state sponsored censorship that forced older metal, rap, punk, and art scenes in America to

engage in self-censorship in order to maintain a scene presence (Binder 1993). These forms of state forced self-reflection also prohibited the kinds of deliberated provocation and wickedness for the sake of being wicked oeuvres, which punks and more underground styles have been able to get away with.

Interestingly, Amy Binder (1993) has described a state sponsored reaction to music (the PMRC Parents Musical Resource Center, led by Tipper Gore) that took place during the nineties at a time when PC (political correctness) policing was gaining strong support from sections of government and the media. Binder provides an informative snap shot of a moment in time when the framing used to comment on violence, sex, drug use and anti-social attitudes in rap and heavy metal music, had artists very much on a defensive footing. The PMRC QUANGO instigated a series of widely publicized hearings in which musicians was called to testify in response to charges that their music was responsible for a generalized corruption of youth and a series of musically inspired suicides. These debates also took place during a time in which Satanic ritual abuse scares were gaining a good deal of attention during the nineties and eighties. In hindsight it is ironic that no-one has yet been prosecuted or proven to be engaged in these forms of abuse. Whereas the Catholic Church was facilitating and protecting priests who were guilty of many of the crimes which these imaginary Satanists were accused of. Yet the bands who were most affected by these modern-day witch hunts, were bands for which there was merely a flirtation with dark aesthetics, as opposed to the overt blasphemies of later Norwegian black metal and a few American death metal bands such as Deicide and Morbid Angel.

Binder (1993) describes the manner in which the PMRC tended to only target mainstream forms of music, using a type of framing that sought to comment on violence,

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sex, drug use and anti-social attitudes in rap and heavy metal music. Binder maintains that

discussions and representations of the wider; "is music harmful to our kids/society

debates?" hinged on a clustering of ideas and referential framing that the media uses in

order to ideologically reinforce moral standpoints and arguments. Therefore the lesser

known subcultures of extreme metal in which some of the accusations of the PMRC could

perhaps ring true, seemed to avoid the 'gaze' of censorship as they were considered too

marginal to be worthy of comment. Their audience wasn't big enough therefore they fell

below the gaze. In light of this, it is worth considering Binder's research question; of

"how and why certain frames resonate with cultural beliefs in the society at large?"

(Binder 1993:755).

Binder answers her own question by demonstrating that the way in which

commentators construct arguments, is based on events or objects that resonate when they

can be confirmed by cultural givens (1993:755).

By focusing on popular mainstream metal bands such as Judas Priest, and Twisted

Sister, other issues of class and habitus were also brought into focus in a meta-narrative

that criticized forms of working class (mostly) male sociality. That is the 'taken for

grantedness' of the PMRC's assumption that heavy metal was/is the music of poor 'white

thrash' and therefore needs to be controlled and regulated in the same manner that

previous generations reacted against a perceived 'corrupting influence of jazz, Elvis and

The Beatles.

Binder refers to these 'cultural givens' as 'referent images', which are the product

of rhetorical, empirical and ideological framing devices that commentators use in order to

demonstrate to their audience the "relevance of the frame to the reader and bring the

frame to life" (1993:755). Binder uses what she calls 'coding categories', in order to

group media treatments of rap and metal into coherent and treatable categories of knowledge (1993: 757). One such category is the 'generation gap', which in Binder's elaboration on the habitus surrounding heavy metal music, resonates with Feld's 'song structure mirroring social structure thesis' (Feld 1990), which Binder finds some commentators using in order to advocate a more nuanced understanding of rap music.

Previously rap and heavy metal music had been loosely coded in the public imaginary, based on perceptions that rooted the music along lines of race/class and style, and a hope amongst the 'moral majority' that the music would not transcend these categories. However as these forms of music became commercially successfully, so the level of hysteria increased as large numbers of suburban middle class kids became interested in rap and metal music. Despite heavy metal borrowing hugely from African American blues and rock music, the majority of musicians who achieved mainstream success came from white working class backgrounds. The styles, codes, aesthetics, and subject matter of rap and metal were also poles apart, with rap focusing on the immediate social environment, politics, partying and sex. Whereas although metal sometimes touched upon these areas as subject matter, its main focus has generally been on the occult, mythology, love, death, the macabre and breaking out of the mundane. During the emergence of these forms of music and until quite late in their development; there was very little cultural/genre crossing taking place between rap and metal.

All of this changed in 1986 when the bands Aerosmith and Run DMC collaborated on a reworking of the song "*Walk This Way*". This collaboration between two bands in prominent and influential positions within their (previously separate) respective genres, facilitated a new focus in rap and rock/metal that led to numerous imitations/borrowings/innovations by bands from not only the main genres of rap and

metal but also collaborations within the sub-genres of 'gangsta' rap, death metal, hardcore, grunge and hip hop. Although the Aerosmith/RunDMC collaboration was tinged with self-parody and humor, future genre crossing collaborations in a similar vein were enacted more ernestly.

The most memorable of these collaborations was the one between thrash metal band Anthrax and political rappers Public Enemy on the song "*Bring the Noize*". In this collaboration the musical elements of each band blended in such a way as to emphasize the lyrical intensity of Chuck D's deep agitprop voice with Anthrax' down-tuned guitars and pounding bass adding a pounding catchy hook that spawned a whole wave of imitators and achieved a unique sound that had previously been unheard in metal and rap. Unlike some collaborations between such unlikely bedfellows this collaboration worked brilliantly on a number of levels. Public Enemy provided Anthrax with a veneer of street cred and cool that had been quite lacking in eighties metal. While Anthrax provided Public Enemy with a booming sonic intensity that fit perfectly with the bands charged political rhetoric.

These collaborations proved highly influential and were copied by many of each bands peers in their respective genres. Eventually this fusion of styles evolved from being a two band collaboration/hybrid into a separate genre of music that became codified in the nu-metal genre, as typified by bands such as Limp Bizcuit, Slipknot, and Bodycount, etc. Perhaps the best example of the two band collaborations was the soundtrack for the 1993 film '*Judgment Night*', in this case the soundtrack has outshone the film and is still widely available. Yet this also marked a turning point in that rap-metal shifted over the course of a year or two as bands singing in a cohesive and unified rap-metal style achieved success in their own right, as opposed to bands from two separate genres collaborating on hybrid

projects, for example Rage Against The Machine, Bodycount, and Red Hot Chilli Peppers.

MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE
JUDGMENT NIGHT
HELMET & HOUSE OF PAIN
TEENAGE FANCLUB & DE LA SOUL
LIVING COLOUR & RUN D.M.C.
SONIC YOUTH & CYPRESS HILL
BIOHAZARD & ONYX
FAITH NO MORE & BOO-YAA TRIBE
SLAYER & ICE-T
MUDHONEY & SIR MIX-A-LOT

Track listing

#	Title	Artists
1.	"Just Another Victim"	Helmet and House of Pain
2.	"Fallin'"	Teenage Fanclub and De La Soul
3.	"Me, Myself, & My Microphone"	Living Colour and Run DVC
4.	"Judgment Night"	Biohazard and Onyx
5.	"Disorder" (Medley of 3 Exploted songs: "War", "UK 82", and "Disorder")	Slayer and Ice T
6.	"Another Body Murdered"	Faith No More and Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E.
7.	"I Love You Mary Jane"	Sonic Youth and Cypress Hill
8.	"Freak Momma"	Mudhoney and Sir Mix-A-Lot
9.	"Missing Link"	Dinosaur Jr and Del the Funkee Homos
10.	"Come and Die"	Therapy? and Fatal
11.	"Real Thing"	Pearl Jam and Cypress Hill

(Cover artwork and track listing for Judgement Night soundtrack taken from www.wikipedia.com on 13/05/09).

On the bottom right hand corner of the album cover above is a 'Parental Advisory', sticker; this is the visible result of actions of the PMRC. Although the intention of the sticker was to warn parents of the so called 'dangers' of the music contained within, the actual effect was amusingly counterproductive. Initially artists were resentful of having their cover artwork flagged in this manner, yet very quickly the 'parental advisory' sticker began to function as an indicator of quality for the more explicit or extreme bands from a whole range of music genres. Instead of marginalizing the music with a stigmatic label, musicians and fans embraced the stigma and began wearing T-shirts, patches and pins with the 'parental advisory' logo.

Binder article also provides an interesting summary of the discourse and events surround the trials that the PMRC brought against several bands and the activities and findings of a senate hearing in which 'expert witness' testimonies were heard. So-called

experts testified to being able to hear backwards messaging, or as it is also called back-masking, in the music. This was the idea that if certain records were played backwards, a message could be heard. The PMRC claimed that Led Zepplin had used back-masking to promote Satanism in the song '*Stairway to Heavan*'. These claims were defeated in court and eventually held to ridicule in the media, and in a manner similar to the subversion of the 'parental discretion' sticker. Slayer and several other bands began to deliberately include backwards messaging on their albums, as featured on the intro track to their 1985 album '*Hell Awaits*' (http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_cul5.htm accessed on 13/05/09).

Two distinct categories of discourse emerge throughout Binder's article, authors who sought to defend rap music on the basis that it represents authenticity, 'street cred', and voices of the marginalized. Commentators who defended heavy metal music spoke of generational misunderstandings and also a thinly disguised snobbery which allowed the media to construct heavy metal as simplistic buffoonery and therefore harmless. Both types of argument hinged on a desire by commentators to find merit and bestow authenticity on the musical forms. The discourse concerning the fear of rap music was widely informed by the same types of a generalized fear of violence and gang type behavior which is depicted in some genres of rap and hip hop music. The fear of heavy metal music stems from the perception of a threat to white middle class teenagers and a belief that is fosters a type of marginalized individualism that leads to suicide, depression, drug use and creates lone individual psychopaths, such as Richard Ramirez. Ramirez was a prolific serial killer who was known to stalk his victims before murdering them. During his trial it came to light that he was a fan of the heavy metal band ACDC. (Although in an

interesting aside, it would be fairer to allow the gothic music scene to claim Ramirez as he once dated the vampiric guitarist and singer Eva O, of popular gothic/death rock bands Christian Death and The Super Heroines).

On one level there is a fear that mainstream rap and metal represented a threat to society in general, and at another level a threat to the imagined nuclear family. What makes her work particularly interesting is that Binder is writing at a time when the boundaries between these two musical genres was more fixed and less genre leaking took place (until collaborations between Aerosmith and Run DMC, and Public Enemy and Anthrax). Where the analysis falls a little short is in Binders surprise that the types of analysis and discursive categories used to discuss metal and rap should be so different. This is a type of analysis which seeks to ignore categories of race and class as if they did not exist, not in an overt way but in a manner that suggests that if both categories were analyzed along the same lines, perhaps we would live in a better world?

Overall Binder makes some interesting arguments, and although some of the research seems slightly dated by now, it does provide an insight into how and why sections of the media construct 'referent images' in order to efface real and imagined socio-cultural differences that manifest in musical genres.

By the time black metal had become popular and received the attention of the global music press (though largely this attention was related to non-musical activities), the world had become as Friedman has claimed 'flattened' (Friedman 2006). That is the barriers to relatively unregulated direct interaction between fans and bands disappeared within the space of a few years. Therefore people were capable of producing and distributing music and merchandise that could never possibly be sold in mainstream

music outlets, yet could be easily picked up on websites. Such as the cds below with their 'distinctive' artwork.

(Album artwork of the bands Marduk and Thor's Hammer) .

Through the use of the internet and other new technologies that came into mainstream use during the nineteen nineties, previously established tape trading networks were transformed into small and large scale independent music distribution companies. This meant that there were few if any, obstacles in the path of black metal musicians who wanted to distribute their music. These networks managed to largely bypass 'official' outlets and thus facilitated a genre of music in which mainstream censorship almost ceased to be an issue. Therefore previously marginal music scenes were now able to avail of wider market forces than had ever been achieved before in older tape trading networks.

Whilst the majority of death and black metals distribution networks remained 'underground' and more or less 'independent', several also became incorporated into larger record labels, or took up distribution and recording deals with major labels. Earache

Records are a good example of 'bedroom culture' becoming mainstream, founder Digby Pearson had signed Napalm Death to his label whilst he was still distributing and marketing music from his bedroom in 1986 (Mudrian 2004:121). "Initially it was just a way to get off the dole in England", "if you start a company you get the same amount of money and you don't have to visit the unemployment office every two weeks", "and it was an excuse to say, 'Wow', I'm a record company!" (Pearson in Mudrian 2004:121). By 1992 Earache became hugely successful and signed a North American licensing deal to promote some of their bands, which in turn led to the label becoming a global 'extreme' music success. Today several of the major record labels employ sub-divisions which focus entirely on 'extreme' music and while this has proved a suitable career path for many death metal bands in their transition from 'underground' to mainstream, it has not been a route taken by as many black metal bands. Although several have become hugely popular there is a tendency to stick to smaller labels and distribute their music independently, rather than compromise on the message and engage in a Faustian pact with the major labels.

Given the fact that so much music is now downloaded rather than purchased in retail outlets, this change actually suits bands who can market their CDs T-shirts and merchandise from their homes or whilst on tour. With regards to The Stone and May Result, although they are signed to two different underground record labels, and it is from sales of merchandise during tours and concerts that they derive their main band revenue. However they also cater to the fetishistic veneration of artifacts amongst their fans by releasing limited edition (usually 666 copies) vinyl's and enhanced package CDs with accompanying artwork, patches and badges. This ties in neatly with some of Adorno's observations in his essay "*The fetish Character in Music and the Regression in Listening*"

(2001). In this essay Adorno applies some of the criteria discussed in Marx work on

commodity fetishism and applies it to the consumption of music. However the use of

sections of Adorno's critique here are by no means an endorsement of his pessimistic

world-view, but snippets are useful due to the way in which Adorno problematizes the

taken-for-grantedness of music in popular culture. In cementing allegiance to a band or

music scene, the material quality of the medium takes on an intoxicating relevance. The

quality of the thing, is the dazzling luster that provides and holds a fascination. This

quality of discourse as power has been discussed in the previous chapter, but here the

micro, as in the artifact is analyzed in a commentary on the magickal hold it exerts over

collectors and listeners.

> One promptly goes into raptures at the well announced sound of a Stradivarius or
> Amati, which only the ear of a specialist, can tell from that of a good modern
> violin. (Adorno 2001:37).

The same is true also of the distinction between the sound of vinyl and digital

music for many black metal fans. The commodity takes on this seductive character that

transcends expectations. So even when music is being played on sub-standard hi-fi

equipment, the whole package, artwork, song lyrics and quality of the imagery and sound,

can enhance the experience in a manner that sterile digital formats are unable to inspire.

Kozeljnik of The Stone/May Result has made a point of never downloading music, and

only listens to copied music in order to preview before purchase.

> Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and the sublime which are generously
> accorded it.. serves as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire
> in order to be able to hear music. (Adorno 2001:38)

Yet Adorno's world view is a grimly pessimistic one, in which the individual has

been subsumed by a hegemonic 'culture industry' (2001) in which agency, anarchy and the

potential for subversion have been phased out. In the introduction to "*The Culture*

Industry" Bernstein sums up this point quite succinctly:

> The culture industry is no longer the purveyor of a monolithic ideology but, however unwittingly or unintentionally, includes moments of conflict, rebellion, opposition and the drive for emancipation and utopia. While pop music, for example, may exhibit the features of commodification, reification and standardization, it can equally express emotions of pain, rage, joy, rebellion, sexuality... Because Adorno's theory lacks these dimensions, it pictures the audience of the culture industry as the dupes of mass deception, denying thus the relative autonomy of consciousness. This can lead to a politics of resignation and despair and cannot account for the struggles advanced against capitalism. (Bernstein 2001:21)

Where Adorno analysis is useful, is as a counter argument to the 'glass is always half-full'

'globalization is great', militant positivism of Friedman (2006) and other commentators.

Quite often there is a tendency to see the web as an emancipating tool that simply flattens

hierarchies and creates egalitarian flows of information and commerce. Whereas, had

Adorno lived to witness the recent elections in Iran (2010) and the trajectory of the events

as they played out towards a disappointing reinstatement of Ahmadinejad's regime. It is

likely that he would have bypassed the instantaneous-mobilization-of-democracy-via-

facebook.com narrative, and pointed to the regime's use of social media whereby

protesters' facebook photos were used to identify people in subsequent retaliations.

Therefore although the internet has been successful to date in spreading underground

music scenes; beyond the gaze of the church and state in Serbia, this tactic could just as

easily be reversed should a conservative zeitgeist happen to take root. Should this happen

and if the conspiracy theorists are right, that secret services were instrumental in the

establishment of online social networks, Adorno could shake a reproachful finger at the

positivists. Most likely the technology used is far too new; to allow us to discern the

extent to which it either reinforces hegemony, or can bring about its' downfall. Probably

the truth is somewhere in between, but the thoughts of a stasi-like network or state supported security service with access to my myspace.com profile page, is one that chills me to the bone.

So Underground They Wont Come Out to Play.

Unusually for such lively guitar and drum based forms of metal music, there are several black metal bands such as Bathory and Darkthrone who almost never play live, yet still retain a huge following. Although puzzling to outsiders, this phenomenon seems entirely in keeping with the individualistic and misanthropic ethos of black metal. There are also a few additional factors that make it possible for these bands to achieve a degree of success, despite the fact that they rarely if ever play live concerts. In general the lo-fi (low production quality) aesthetic of black metal has similarities to the sound qualities of early death metal recordings. For the majority of the nineteen eighties and nineties death metal bands who were instrumental in founding and establishing the genre, their main format was the audio cassette. These cassettes were widely distributed, copied over and played repeatedly to such an extent that the sound quality developed a deeply muffled tone (People often joke that the vocals in black metal sound similar to someone vomiting into the mike' and that the guitars sound like angry bees buzzing around a biscuit tin. These styles of music featured extensive use of distortion pedals, reverb, down-tuned guitars and vocal effects to enhance the growled sound of vocals). The resulting mix, means that as a genre, the sound quality of death metal suffered less from the medium of tape trading than perhaps mainstream music featuring high production values did. People who came of age using the tape trading networks learned to appreciate, even venerate the lo-fi production values, and in some ways it gave the music a further layer of mystique.

Again there are echoes of the deeply fetishistic character of music consumption present in the cultivation of this aesthetic.

With regards to notions of cultural capitol and habitus, the lo-fi audio quality of death metal that resulted from tape trading, eventually fed into a nostalgia amongst older death and black metal fans who remember swapping and recording tapes for friends and the excitement associated with sending and receiving cassette tapes, fliers and fanzines by mail. Therefore this could help to explain the development of sub-genres within black metal that treat low production quality and a harsh buzzing sound in the recording mix as an effect that they are proud of. For example bands such as Darkthrone, Beastcraft and Koldbrann (signed to Grom records), have had their sound described as 'necrosound' an adjective that is supposed to conjure up images of death, decay, and funeral crypts. 'necro' is also used as a complimentary descriptive term, in the same way that one might say 'cool', ie. "that song is necro as fuck".

As well as the sound quality there is also a visual aesthetic to this style which has come about through a blend of scene mixing with social structure. Most of the accompanying artwork used by 'necro' bands is produced in stark black and white contrasts; that hark back to the style of cheaply photocopied fliers and fanzines used during the tape trading era of the eighties and nineties. Even though some bands from that era such as Darkthrone have become quite successful and are using mainstream distribution networks there is still a tendency to favor this DIY aesthetic. Some of Darkthrone's latest releases echo the back-to-basics aesthetic that rock and metal musicians have often adopted after more than a decade creating music. Below is a flyer featuring the cover artwork for Darkthone's *F.O.A.D*. (Fuck off and Die) CD.

Darkthrone Promotional image (taken from

The artwork above depicts a graphic horror-cartoon style of album cover that is reminiscent of nineteen eighties death metal album covers. Generally members of the band or associates sketched the artwork using pencil and black inks in a visually striking but unrealistic fantasy style. This style was used to controversial effect in the nineteen eighties by bands such as Napalm Death, Cannibal Corpse, Death and Bolt Thrower, often in emulation of the more expensive cover art used by bands such Iron Maiden and Metallica. The more successful bands would employ professional artists to produce beautiful and elaborate images and design logos for the bands, often using air brush techniques in the 'pre-photoshop' days. Ironically there is often just as much effort (although less expense) going into using photo imaging and graphic design software

packages to produce an image for a modern CD that appears to emulate the 'old school black and white xerox' style that largely came about through economic necessity.

This back-to-basics urge amongst metal musicians has been well documented in the speed, death and thrash metal sub-genres of music by Deena Weinstein (2000) who likened it to a reformation in music similar to the protestant reformation. By this she meant a limiting of the distance between performer and audience and a move away from elaborate flamboyant costumes (Weinstein 2000:50). For these styles of music; moving away from the overblown flamboyance and theatrical opera-like stage sets of bands such as Kiss, Led Zepplin and Iron Maiden was interpreted by Weinstein as a movement in which:

> The distance between artists and their fans was physically, emotionally, and attitudinally erased, just as the Protestants narrowed the distance between the minister and the communicants. (Weinstein 2000:50)

Weinstein may be overstating her case, nevertheless the real and imagined proximity between band and audience is a significant push-pull factor in many subcultures. One of the virtues that proponents of 'underground' music scenes regularly cite, is the fact that the bands are often very accessible. Forster takes issue with Kahn-Harris assertion that 'extreme metal as a whole arose as [a] fundamentalist response to the excesses and popularity of 1980's heavy metal (Forster 2006:23, Kahn-Harris 2004). Forster maintains that this idea is contradicted by "black metal bands' live performances. Primarily this is because they can essentially be regarded as a form of performance art" (2006:24). Forster bases this thesis on the fact that black metal musicians do instantiate a distance between audience and performer through the use of elaborate costume, 'corpsepaint', and spikes etc (see chapter, 'the Gift and Collective Effervescence'). However any argument that hinges on a widespread generalization about a phenomenon as complex as a music scene

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will always be subject to a number of hair-splitting criticisms. In a manner of speaking, this genre of criticism can become quite circular and a lot of ink to not really say anything worthwhile. With regards to music scenes as they evolve over time, something that may seem reactionary in hindsight is more often a result of limited economies and practical necessity. By forcing together categories of knowledge and discourse that are only produced in hindsight, there may be a tendency to produce an explanation that involves too pronounced a level of abstraction, especially when we are discussing 'glocal' scenes responding to one another.

This is where the concept of an escalation theory may prove applicable, it is commonly articulated that punk music arose out of social discontent that failed to find articulation within mainstream rock music. Subsequently, 'anarcho-punk' arose out of discontent with mainstream punk, and then in the 1990s there was a revival of the styles and sounds of 'traditional' 1970s punk and new wave ie. the Brit-pop phenomenon in which bands borrowed a sound and style similar to The Jam's mod revival and The Buzzcocks brash art-punk-rock. Therefore when examining scenes that are both influenced by and in response to, older established genres, quite often the styles and sounds produced are either a coded escalation or de-escalation. With regards to the black metal scene in Norway, it could be considered an escalation, in that it infused the metal lyrical themes with a destructive and lethal dose of authenticity that resulted in suicide, murder, and church arson (in both reality and popular consciousness).

Occult Iconography: Bonded by Hate.

The founders of Grom records in Serbia are both veterans of the tape trading era and therefore have often mentioned the pleasures associated with those forms of music networking and distribution (see chapter on gender). The choice of artists that Grom records have signed to their label also indicates this fondness for 'old school', 'necro' bands, particularly with the signing of Norwegian bands Beastcraft and Koldbrann.

Beastcraft cd artwork.   **Koldbrann cd artwork.**

The artwork on the CDs above is resolutely 'old school', and in addition to the style of CD covers, both bands also release some of their music on vinyl and audio cassette. This is also true of The Stone and May Result, and their members have a deep appreciation of the value of the material artifacts and commodity fetishism of the black metal genre. Several of the bands releases also include fabric patches, stickers and badges that are considered highly collectable. On occasions when I returned to Serbia after a period of absence Urok and Kozeljnik, had kept 'limited edition' copies of May Result and The Stone CDs and vinyl's for me. These artifacts are often used by bands and individuals to trade and present as gifts, whilst on tour or when visiting each other. This is another aspect of the scene which seems to be the same in most countries and reinforces the sense of connectedness and mutuality throughout the wider European scene.

This manner of trading and exchanging knowledge, music and artifacts is instrumental in creating connections between north, central and eastern European scenes. On one occasion that I know of a CD by a Romanian band, was given to a member of an Irish band by someone from Serbia and some time later the bands collaborated by touring together.

There are also many individuals within the black metal scene for whom participation and mutuality derives from interacting and creating identity based projects on the internet as opposed to the face to face types of interaction that was an essential feature of older sub-cultures. If the declared aesthetic of Norwegian black metal is misanthropy and individualism, and if we also take into account the high levels of depression, low population density and long hours of darkness in Scandinavian countries, it is possible to view this celebration of misanthropic individualism as an example of the social and environmental structure, informing the sound or scene structure of Norwegian black metal. Of course this is an overly simplistic line of analysis, nevertheless it was a superficial preoccupation as I begun this project and a convenient one-sentence-phrase that helped me to clarify ideas which were developed further as the project progressed.

Therefore when I began researching Serbian black metal, I was interested in the degree to which the social structure informed the scene structure of Serbian black metal. With regards to the recorded music this was fairly obvious, for example The Stone use sound samples from the NATO bombing of Beograd as an intro to their album *Some Wounds Bleed Forever* (2000). There is also the band Wolf's Hunger who merged a style of black metal with themes from Serbian skinhead music which was much more politically infused than the music of The Stone or May Result.

(Wolf's Hunger CD cover).

(Image taken from www.wolfs-hunger.co.sr accessed on 02/10/2006)

But with regard to the social structure of the scene there are also noticeable differences in the way that people socialize when compared to the scenes in Western Europe that I'm more familiar with. Serbia's high unemployment rates, coupled with the fact that many of the black metal fans I know are students for whom it is difficult to find full time employment, means that people have a good deal of free time to socialize together in each others home's or outdoors during the long warm summers. This type of close hanging-out in large groups is the norm and much more common in Serbia than it is in Western Europe. Because of this closeness and ease in each others company there is a stronger sense of community within the Serbian black metal scene and a huge amount of time and effort is invested in maintaining the face-to-face nature of the scene. People regularly call over to each other unannounced or whenever interesting new CDs or DVDs are purchased or downloaded. Or on occasions when bands were recording albums or preparing concerts, a large extended group of friends could be called upon in order to

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carry out tasks, and favors. Therefore, despite the outward aesthetic of the scene

appearing quite introverted, individualistic and hierarchical there is a pronounced sense of

community that is at odds with the misanthropic "Slavonic order of hatred" aesthetic of

the scene in general.

(May Result's, Slavonic Order of Hatred Logo).

In recent years a number of ethnomusicological studies have focussed on Yugo

nostalgia in Balkan music scenes, particularly with regard to 'turbofolk', gypsy music (Van

De Port 1999,1998) and 'yu rock' (Stankovic 2001). What these studies have found is that

the enduring popularity of these forms of music is often based on a fatalistic and inward

looking sense of escapism and nostalgia for an imagined idyllic past. Or, in the case of yu

rock, which was popular with people from the larger urban centers of Yugoslavia,

particularly those who fled the war:

> There is a strong correlation between the urban culture of rock and a sane retreat
> from the nationalist madhouse. (Stankovic 2001:105)

With regard to the wider black metal scene none of the arguments that apply to the rock, rave, turbo-folk or nationalist music scenes really apply in the same manner. Rather there is an over-lapping of motivations and attitudes towards ethno-nationalism, sociality and the degree to which reality pervades the music in black metal. There is also a pronounced element of fantasy, escapism and disdain toward contemporary modernity. Yet outside of cyber-space, the Serbian scene differs in that its' members have formed friendships, international networks, and a degree of integration with the political, and social economies of scenes all over Europe, during a period of isolation out of which Serbia has only recently emerged. So despite the overproduction of black metal negativity on the internet, in the flesh there is a healthy and vibrant community that exists in antipathy to black metal's 'fuck the world agenda'.

CHAPTER 4

Scene Dissemination, Gender, Male Bonding and Sociality in Serbian Black Metal.

> Like opera heavy metal draws upon many sources of power: mythology, violence, madness, the iconography of horror. Burt none of these surpasses gender in its potential to inspire anxiety and to ameliorate it. (Walser :109)

When writing about new social movements, some questions that need to be raised are; what is the appeal and attraction for members, why this scene and not another, and are the answers to these questions informed by a consideration of gender issues? As a music scene, not only did black metal spread quite quickly from the early nineteen nineties onwards, but black metal type bands seemed to appear almost simultaneously in countries outside of Scandinavia. For many bands, a basic black metal sound structure had already been laid down by death metal bands during the mid to late nineteen eighties, but it was the fact that Norwegian bands such as Mayhem, Emperor and Varg Vikernes solo project; Burzum actually practiced aspects of the lifestyle that they sang about which solidified the genre (see intro sections). When the Punk scene in the nineteen seventies migrated to other cities around the world it spawned a high level of Pistols, Clash and Dead Kennedys imitators. The early black metal bands also bore sound similarities to the Norwegian bands, but the blood soil and mythology aesthetic meant that these similarities gradually disappeared, and in each country the bands became quite distinctive in terms of style.

By the mid-nineteen nineties the first incarnation of The Stone had begun playing together and were one of the first black metal bands to release a song featuring operatic-

style female vocals on one of their early albums. Similar black metal bands also formed in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic. These non-Scandinavian bands also formed their own networks and gigging/trading circuits and functioned as an alternative scene, playing in neighboring countries in which it was easier to get visas as opposed to central and Northern Europe which had much more restrictive visa regulations. Some of them also introduced elements into the music scenes in their respective countries that had not previously existed. This is particularly so in the Czech Republic where the band Root, were the first to cultivate a Satanic music scene. The singer Big Boss also translated the first Czech language version of Anton La Vey's Satanic Bible.

One of the explanations as to why the black metal scene tends to spread so easily to other countries, is that the conceptual themes in the music are very similar to forms of romantic/volkish nationalism (as discussed in the previous chapter). Albeit this takes place on a smaller sub-cultural level, and is largely confined to younger groups of people or people who were already interested in other styles of metal music. Another reason that the scene has spread so widely; is that the sound is not based on a musical style that has a strictly geographic location. For example certain styles of blues and rock will always be associated with the Delta areas of Southern America. Motown soul music is associated with Chicago, and certain rock styles such as Merseybeat and the Manchester sound, all sound slightly (matter) out of place when played by bands in other countries. True there are always exceptions to this phenomenon, Led Zepplin played good Delta blues, and certain Irish crooners seem to have an enduring enduring appeal by playing the kind of muzak one could expect to hear in a tacky Vegas casino. But part of the continuing evolution of the black metal music genre has involved trying to find and imagine a

European sound that is adrift and separate from it's rock n' blues origins. Hence the change from deep bass and down-tuned Black Sabbath style guitars to a more upbraided, harsher fidelity, that Harris Berger describes as having origins in classical music (Berger 1999). True Berger was referring mainly to heavy and death metal styles, but these are the elements that have crossed over most noticeably into black metal, elements of music that derive from Chopin, Mozart, Wagner and other composers in their more bombastic moments. Many of the black metal bands who begun their careers using a 'typical' black metal sound with screamed vocals, blast beats on drums and heavily distorted guitar, actually evolved over the years and began to gradually infuse their music with elements of their countries folk music. Although it was not simply a 'sound borrowing' that took place, these borrowings also moved the conceptual location of the music. If Punk and hip hop etc. are urban styles, black metal is an interesting exception to this rule (which is also excepted in Slovenia, see Mursic (1995), because although largely an urban phenomenon, it contains a strong nostalgic yearning for a an imaginary of a mountainous wilderness. This yearning for a wilderness can be understood in how the wilderness is conceptualized. Perhaps the best insight into how a wilderness is imagined comes from Frederick Jackson Turner's '*Frontier Thesis*' (1935), in which he theorizes the experience of European people coming to the North American continent and settling, but always keeping in mind the existence of a threatening wilderness. The idea that there is a vast unclaimed (indigenous inhabitants are not considered by Turner) space which offers the twin possibilities of freedom and an opportunity to move through the landscape using only one's wits and ingenuity. The experience of the wilderness, being tested in a symbiotic relationship with nature is claimed by Turner to have changed the essential character of the Europeans who settled in America. This is because the idea of a free unclaimed space,

had not previously existed on the European continent. This was something entirely new and according to Turner the landscape had the effect of shaping the character of the people and not vice versa (1935). This fantasy/desire to be placed placed in a wilderness environment is also a strong but largely unrealized preoccupation amongst many black metal scene members.

Although black metal events typically take place in cities, the idea of a wilderness is often present as an inspiration for song lyrics and album artwork. On an occasion when I intended to go on holiday in Crno Gora with a friend named Marko Simic from Uzice, Kozeljnik of The Stone/May Result, asked if I could try to take a photograph that might be suitable for album artwork. He wanted a photo that contained sky, mountains and water, the natural elements, but with no people. On The Stone's Mgla (meaning fog) album, the artwork used came from photos taken whilst Kozeljnik was in the mountains. An analysis of gender undertaken, along the lines outlined by Walser, has found that metal is concerned with anxiety over the allure and threat of femininity and (1993: 108), and that metal is 'goal centered rather than relationship centered (115). Therefore the absence of feminine images, ideas or a presence in the lyrical themes and artwork could perhaps be justified. Or, this may be too neat a conclusion as it ignores the underlying misanthropic aesthetic of black metal, in which an absence of humans is the genre norm and therefore the gendered reading is slightly problematic.

> Even in many nonperformance metal videos, where narratives and images are placed not on a stage but elsewhere, the point is the same: to represent and reproduce spectacles that depend for their appeal on the exscription of women. (Walser 1993:115)

The only proviso that I would add to the above statement would be to substitute the word "women" for "people". Black metal in some song lyrics, and in many of the

scene member's attitudes encompasses this desire, a preference for the bleaker, harsh, icy aspects of natural beauty, a conceptual location shorn of human comforts and structures in which a new subjectivity may be formed. Most black metal bands tend always to sing from the perspective of the aggressor, the overlord, the warrior, the shaper of magickal forces in commune with dark powers. This holds a powerful masculine appeal, a *Conan the Barbarian*, *Lord of the Rings* (esque), sense of purpose and power, the ultimate male fantasy of leaving a city that is viewed as intrusively panoptic, crowded, and mundane, instead to set off for a life of questing (even if this only takes place within the fantasy of music). This is largely an unrealized fantasy, but nevertheless the values inherent in these imaginaries have a powerful hold on the way in which friendships, loyalty and relationships are conceptualized and the manner in which the neo-tribe is realized. Expressed in words and without the drinking, camaraderie and booming music in the background, these sentiments seem nerdy and far fetched. However in a house in the mountains, or amongst a group people dressed in black, drunk in a cemetery late at night, or in the bands tour bus, or when watching a crowd go crazy at a gig as a frantic mosh pit surges back and forth, these words make sense again. They appeal to a particular version of masculinity, one that thrives on both Bacchanalian celebration, and an obsession with skill, control, and virtuosity through musicianship (Walser 1993:108).

This was the kind of extended boozy sociality experienced whenever I stay with Urok and Veliki Marko in Novi Sad, even the flimsiest excuse for a party would do, and we'd spend days drinking and nights 'invading' the local bars for a 'total alcoholocaust'. A typical day during my visits to the Novi Sad horde, would generally begin in the late afternoon. Urok and Veliki Marko who (still) share an apartment in the center of Novi Sad have a profoundly louche attitude, and a casual approach to work and study. Urok works

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in a local music shop and Veliki Marko is trying to break records for longest period spent at university. The time I spent in Novi Sad was hugely enjoyable and deeply infused with a sense of hedonistic carnival that was sometimes at odds with the relaxed pace of life and mellow atmosphere that abounds in the city.

Beograder's always joke that everything is slower in Novi Sad, even the pace at which people talk. In contrast to Novi Sad, Beograd has a hurried chaotic atmosphere, with constantly crowded buses, streets and high speed pedestrians who have done away with the formalities of door opening and turn taking. This clash of attitudes also manifests itself within The Stone/May Result's recording and rehearsal schedule. Urok's lax attitude to turning up for band rehearsals would sometimes infuriate Kozeljnik and was so at odds with Kozeljnik's draining always-on-the-go lifestyle in Beograd. Before I was familiar with Urok's live performances with The Stone, I was fully sure that he was going to make a spectacular mess of his bass lines during their live gigs, as he had missed so many rehearsals and on one occasion showed up without a functioning instrument. When I did see his live performance I realized I had gotten it so wrong, Urok is an excellent bass player with an intimidating, leering stage presence, who seems to be able to learn his bass and keyboard parts simply by listening in on the occasional rehearsal session. Also the trek from Novi Sad to Beograd, although technically not that far, can be prohibitively expensive to make on a regular basis. So this was another factor that affected Urok's ability to attend regular rehearsals.

When anthropologist Van De Port conducted fieldwork in Novi Sad exploring the gypsy music scene, notions of respectability and the manner in which people dealt with the "barbarity of war in the post war period" (1998), there was a sense of 'matter out of place' in relation to ideas of normality, in light of the conflict that was taking place. Van

De Port and other commentators mentioned in his ethnography have tended to depict Novi Sad along a number of trajectories; "Novi Sad represents the Serbia that has for centuries been part of civilized Europe" (1998:32) and also as a cosmopolitan city populated with *fini ljudi* (decent people) (40). Van De Port seemed to meet a good deal of people who could easily fall under the category of middle class by virtue of criteria more aligned to cultural as opposed to financial capitol. He was writing at a time (1998) of considerable tension and change, documenting the interface between the 'civilized' and the 'savage' as he took into account the effects of the war from the vantage point of people leaving and returning to Novi Sad. In Matthew Collins "*This is Serbia Calling*", he depicts Novi Sad on the brink of the Nato bombing campaign as a westward oriented Serbian city where the Milosevic regime was strongly opposed (2004). But this west orientation turned inward following the bombing of the bridges, industrial bases and power stations. So whilst the bombing may not have increased support for the regime, it did foster an 'us against the world mentality'. Some of the responses were quite creative and blackly humorous, for example a campaign sending out printed images of targets to people around the world and the invitation to become a human target for NATO.

However the Novi Sad that I experienced was defined by nights in various bars, days spent hanging out in a tattoo studio, and evenings drinking in the local square. Therefore any attempt to marry my account of Novi Sad with discourse on the war or conflict or notions of respectability and European-ness would be something of a forced fit. If anything, by the time I was staying in Novi Sad it was characterized by a return to prosperity, brought about by the success of EXIT festival which drew NGOs, bands, and thousands of people from around Europe, particularly the UK.

The kind of fantasy sociality that occurred in Novi Sad was experienced in slightly different ways in Beograd, in quieter philosophical discussions, and the experience of simultaneity that happened when I lived with Kozeljnik and Jelena in Beograd. In contrast to the permanent 'alcoholocaust' of Novi Sad, at Kozeljnik's apartment we'd spend hours talking about occult literature, horror films, atmospheres, 'reading between the lines' and the role of the individualist within Satanic Paganism. It was while staying with Kozeljnik and Jelena that I learned most of what I know about the underlying ethos and unifying principles that inform the Serbian black metal scene. However this tended to take place incrementally through conversation and observation, as opposed to formal questions or interviews. As such, it was through the experience of day to day life with Kozeljnik, that my knowledge of the scene gradually coalesced into this document with seeks to organize that experience. Although this has been more complicated to quantify as these experiences tend not to flow so readily into the kinds of ethnographic vignettes upon which the thesis is built. As is apparent in the following section, it is more typical of ethnography in general that the misunderstandings which arise during 'fieldwork' are the events which prove most amenable to the anthropological gaze and anecdote.

Mosh Pits and Matter out of Place?

The following section draws from field notes in order to describe some of the gender dynamics that occur in mosh pits at black metal concerts. These are one of the main cohesive social rituals of the black metal scene and typically are a male dominated space. However at Exit festival in 2007 some young women changed the dynamic of the mosh pit during performances by May Result and a few other bands.

Different genres of metal instantiate different types of mosh pit, and this variation also occurs in different countries and regions. Thrash metal, death metal and mainstream heavy metal tend to instantiate mosh pits that are characterized by a violent energetic camaraderie and a high level of group cohesion. During these types of mosh, people act in unison to the encouragement and exhortations of the band. This can sometimes manifest in a circle-pit, where people bounce and shove each other clockwise or anti-clockwise in a large but tightly packed circle, grappling and punching as they move. This type of pit is typical of nineties thrash and Floridian death metal bands, particularly the band Exodus. Within the black metal scene the pits often appear to be more violent and quite gladiatorial in some cases with people adopting a more individualist form of violence as opposed to the camaraderie of other styles of metal. This is evidenced in the facial expressions and grimaces of hate and power that many people display during a black metal mosh pit. Though it must be borne in mind that this is largely an affected stance and rarely spills over into deliberate one-on-one type fighting. Or, when this does happen there is generally an attempt by the crowd to regulate and break up this form of violence. Although I have seen one occasion where the vocalist with the band Gorgoroth stared and pointed at two men fighting at a concert in Dublin and without saying anything caused them to fight even more furiously than they had been.

For many young metal fans the mosh pit can be understood as an important rite of passage, a violent proving ground in which members of a scene will test each other physically with a type of violence that is produced in a symbiotic relationship to the music. Although I have witnessed a few notable exceptions, a full blown mosh pit with fists flying, violent shoving and stage diving is more typically an all male social space. Deena Weinstein argues that in Western culture:

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Masculinity and femininity are dichotomous and mutually opposed cultural forms into which men and women are supposed to fit. (2000:73)

Kahn-Harris also supports this assertion, claiming that:

The absence of women within the scene is fundamental to metal since the music is founded on notions of 'power'... and 'power' is culturally coded as a masculine trait. (2007:73).

This trait and imagining of masculine power is most explicit in live performances, but there are occasional exceptions. One such exception occurred in the mosh pit when May result were playing at Exit festival in 2007. The following section is taken from field-notes written during the concert and some of the longer description has been kept in order to provide a feel for the atmosphere that night:

May Result; 'I'm fucking speechless, there are several hundred people

gathered to watch them although it is difficult to make an accurate count

because the area has become shrouded in darkness with minimal and very

effective light being used for the duration of May Result's set. They have

amazing physical presence tonight and seem to absolutely efface all memory

of the previous bands today. Glad is in excellent form tonight, his

outstretched arms challenge, inspire, he addresses the crowd in Serbian,

praising Satan and summoning a call to arms in the name of Pagan Serbia.

Demonstratas played brilliantly, swinging his guitar wildly and leaning

forward to grimace and snarl into the crowd before stepping back and shaking

his hair over his face as he looses himself in the searing riffs.

Kozeljnik also played expertly, as always more entranced in his

playing than the rest of the band and occasionally they glance toward him to

get their bearings in mid-way through some of the songs. His physical presence is imposing and bear-like, his guitar is hung low just below the tips of his long black and grey hair. Occasionally he glares up from the guitar questioningly into the crowd and with seemingly imperceptible gestures shake his head proudly and extorts a cheer from his fans. Urok as ever is provocative and obnoxious, glaring into the crowd like a fighter urging bloodshed. His corpsepaint is the most transforming of all the guys in the band, for Kozeljnik and Glad the corpsepaint accentuates their already strong and sometimes grim features but for Milan the corpse paint changes his natural easygoing friendly expression into something resembling an angry war-mongering goblin with a misanthropic down turned lecherous leer.

Zombie was less visible behind the drums at the back of the stage but his playing was flawless, thundering a steady barrage throughout each song. Dushan wore something that looked like a long robe but moved swiftly back and forth across the stage swinging his large black guitar out over people's heads and loosing himself completely in the music.

The audience response was fanatical, and tonight challenging the myth that black metal is a male dominated genre were several girls up the front and a few thrashing around furiously in the dust of the mosh pit. After a few songs the girls mosh pit seemed to get bigger and more violent, slamming into each other and grabbing and roughly swinging each other around, more like a skinhead mosh pit. A few of the guys stepped out of the pit and watched the girls, both guys looked bemused but slightly alienated that this normally male space was being taken over by a few girls. One girl in

particular seemed to be orchestrating the violence in the pit and threw herself around wildly, slamming into people who weren't taking part in the pit. This didn't seem to arouse much anger, which may have been the result if it was a guy transgressing the boundaries of the pit so roughly.

Borko suddenly emerged in the crowd carrying a huge inverted cross above his head, when people saw it the crowd let out a roar and started waving the sign of the horns and shouting "slava Satan". The band smiled to themselves acknowledging the gesture but not in an obvious way. Glad looked toward the cross and outstretched his fingers towards it. As the set went on, more people gathered and clouds of dust choked anyone up near the front of the stage. Overall May Result were excellent, even drawing the attention and admiration of several other bands who watched from the backstage area.

Tesstimony; Bolash's band from Hungary were extremely tight, and were playing their second song when the bass player broke a string (a fairly rare occurrence). The normally shy Bolash is a good frontman, very energetic and addresses the crowd in English in between songs, saying hi Novi Cad and chanting "Serbiijaa". Bolash teased the crowd at first asking do they like the music, I found the music a bit hard to get into at first but warmed to them after a few songs. By the time they were mid-way through their set they had done a great job of winning over the crowd. The girl who had dominated the moshpit during the May Result set was going crazy again and Dragana smiled and said "that girl creates a great atmosphere", I said yeah true, she is the moshpit tonight!

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Whilst most of this chapter focuses on interaction, masculinity and male bonding, the description above points out that there are exceptions to the male dominated spaces in the Serbian black metal scene. The presence of females within the mosh pit at Exit festival, while not exactly unwelcome, did invoke a twinge of 'matter out of place' amongst some of the guys in the pit as it was a sight that is relatively uncommon. The black metal scene overall, contains a much higher proportion of males than females and given this demographic factor and the performative nature of interaction on stage and whilst just hanging out, it is unsurprising to find that it is a scene with strong patriarchal attitudes. The brief emphasis on female participation in mosh pits above, should be read as an exception rather than the norm. In chapter six "The Gift and Collective Effervescence", a more detailed analysis of the conventions of the mosh pit is provided which outlines both the adversarial nature of mosh pits, as well as their capacity to create solidarity and exchange.

Misunderstanding, Shame and Male Bonding.

> Debauchee, n.
> One who has so earnestly pursued pleasure that he has had the misfortune to
> overtake it. (Bierce 2004:19)

In 2006 Glad the vocalist with The Stone and May Result, shared an apartment with his (then) girlfriend Ivanna. I have hung out with Glad quite a lot over the past few years and always enjoy his company. He is a brilliant mass of contradictions, tall imposing, intimidating (well over six foot tall, with long hair and a distinguished grey streak) and with an opinion on almost every subject ever broached. These opinions invariably tend to contrast with everybody else's and he can be deeply contrary,

argumentative and incapable of listening to anyone else. However this is balanced with an enthusiastic friendliness, and an ability to skip from topic to topic during conversations, as such there is never a dull moment in his company. Glad also possesses an uncanny knowledge of Irish songs, history, folklore and Gaelic phrases, which meant that we quickly struck up a close friendship that oriented around plenty of subjects and activities outside of black metal. Particularly our fondness for drinking!

When traveling together or visiting museums or public buildings, rules and regulations tended to be hilariously flouted. On a short trip to Serbia in 2008, soon after a European tour by The Stone, Glad was the subject of some hilarious stories and gossip, which very much confirm the wild uncivilized Balkan stereotype discussed by van De Port (1998) and Jezernik (2004). One story, told by members of the Norwegian band Koldbrann, to Urok from The Stone, concerns some strange noises and banging they heard on the window of their hotel room (several stories up). When they opened the window to investigate, Glad burst through it and dashed out of their bedroom door in a drunken rampage! It transpired that earlier that night Glad had been causing so much generalized chaos and drunken mayhem that the guys from the band decided to lock him in their hotel room.

One of my funniest memories from time spent with Glad (and there are many) is of the day we visited the military history museum in Kalamegdon Fortress in Beograd. Having perused most of the collection, we went in search of a bathroom, crossing over the red velvet rope that separated the section of the museum that exhibited the relics of Tito's Yugoslavia. An area that was supposed to be closed to the public and strictly off limits. Strolling past an ostentatious bronze statue of Tito, Glad expressed his displeasure through the medium of projectile saliva! Later as we worked our way through the exhibit,

we made good use of Tito's motorcycle and sidecar as we posed for some humorous pictures of ourselves mounted on said national relic.

Then there was the random chaos and drunken argumentative misunderstanding that happened when hanging out with Glad during my first period in Serbia. On one occasion in 2006 I went to stay with Glad and his then girlfriend Ivanna, and an argument broke out between Glad and I. When it was finally resolved it had some interesting consequences, of the kind which told me a good deal about the degree of connectedness within the Serbian black metal scene, and the extent to which people genuinely take care of each other. The following section is taken from field notes written a few hours after the event.

Ivanna has to leave for work so myself and Glad sit down and listen to music and drink beer, he shows me his extensive record and CD collection, then jokes that "it is nothing like Kozeljnik's collection, but I do allow other people to touch it hahah". Then we joke about Kozeljnik's obsessive behavior when it comes to his music and how he was freaking out earlier because a CD he ordered had arrived with a thumb print on the cover! We talk a lot about when we were younger, lots of crazy '*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas'* style anecdotes about booze and drugs. He tells me some hilarious stories about guys from his home town who take some strange prescription drugs that cause temporary paralysis and paranoia and how they freak out and jump onto a train. Menacingly demanding that the driver, who they treat as if he was driving a taxi, must take them home.

We tell a lot of drinking stories and then Glad offers me some home-made vinjak, which he said I should try but that he wasn't going to drink because it

makes him crazy. However I insist that he also must drink some, because I know

that Glad has an inhumanly high tolerance for alcohol and I don't want to be

completely pissed and talking 'shite' (Glad pronounces 'shite' with a brilliant if

uncannily perfect Irish accent). We down the first shots and Glad tells me, that

on land his grandfather once owned in what is now Bosnia, there is a barrel of

excellent vinjak which was put below the ground and left to age until Glad was

old enough to join the army or get married. Glad's grandfather had to sell the

land because of the war and Glad is really pissed off because he knows that

somewhere below the ground in Bosnia there is a barrel of fantastic quality

vinjak that was supposed to be his. We joke about going to find it, and how by

now the quality must be amazing.

When Ivanna returned we were pretty drunk but very hungry, so Glad prepared a

really tasty dinner of cevapi, bread, salad and ajvar. After dinner we watched the

film '*Rane*' (meaning wounds), it was made by the same director as '*Pretty

Village, Pretty Flame*' and using some viciously black humor, depicts life in

Beograd during the war years. Although it is an amazing film, it is extremely

grim and at times quite harrowing, as it follows the life of two friends from

childhood into their adult years and their descent into crime, gangsterism, drug

use and the bizarre celebrity fascination that attached to these types of characters

during the nineties. Although comedic in parts the ending of the film overall is

something of a sordid metaphor for Serbia during the nineties and the nihilistic

atmosphere evoked, is one that is difficult to shake off. All through the film Glad

and Ivanna were pointing out the accuracy of the film's depiction and the

insanity of everyday life in Beograd during the nineties. By the end of the film I

felt drained and emotionally exhausted and I think Glad felt the same, he tends to get quite emotional about the kinds of issues raised in the film and I was watching, I could discern echoes of what was depicted in the film in the stories he had told me earlier about growing up in Serbia.

In order to raise our spirits and lighten the mood we listen to some Irish music and I explain the significance of songs such as ' *The Foggy Dew'*. Glad then shocks me by singing along with a much better grasp of the lyrics than I had. It turns out that this song was made popular in Serbia by domestic bands The Orthodox Celts and Irish Stew. After a while we didn't even need the accompanying music as we sing more Irish songs, and the vinjak and beer keeps flowing. Overall my abiding memory of that part of the night is of one of those occasions where your face hurts from smiling and the slightest hint of a joke has us rolling around the floor laughing. Describing the state that we had gotten ourselves into Glad quotes Hunter S. Thompson and says that "we're like the town drunk from some early Irish novel", "we have truly made beasts of ourselves".

We kept drinking until the early hours of the morning and at some stage an argument starts. Neither of us can fully remember what led to the argument but I vaguely remember that I had pissed Glad off by asking questions about his politics and ideology. I have no recollection of what they specifically were, but I kept repeating whatever questions I had been asking until Glad looses his temper and repeats my question. He starts asking me "who the fuck are you?" and "why are you asking those fucking questions?"

I suddenly sobered up as I realized that we were standing outside the apartment shouting at each other and about to get into a physical fight. Glad kept asking why was I asking all those questions, but at that stage I really couldn't remember. All I knew was that the situation had become horribly out of control and I felt very very far from home. Ivanna was now outside as well, crying and shouting at us to stop. Suddenly we calm down and realize how close we had come to fighting. I feel totally fucked up and home sick, and we apologize and talk to Ivanna, telling her were sorry. The situation becomes suddenly diffused and we both feel guilty and ashamed over what has happened. At that moment we knew we had gone to far and I feel like I had broken the bonds of friendship and ruined Glad and Ivanna's hospitality. The early morning sun was scorching us now and all of the effects of the booze seemed to just evaporate into a shameful lucid sobriety. We went back inside and fell asleep sleep until about half four in the afternoon. Then I was woken up by a call from my girlfriend in Ireland, I tried to hold a normal conversation but I felt too homesick, stupid and ashamed.

Glad and Ivanna also got up after my phone call. We all feel uncomfortable and tense, things had gotten out of control and our drinking had caused a fucked up situation. We chill out for a while, drinking tea and coffee, Ivanna tells me she is pissed off with Glad because he is always getting drunk and starting fights. I tell her not to take it out on him because it was just as much my fault, I was the one who kept asking stupid questions and provoking him. I made her promise not to be angry with him and apologized over and over again for what happened. She seems to agree, and in my confused ashamed state she seemed to radiate

kindness and warmth and gives me a hug that helped ease the queasy sensation of being so far from home.

A kind of quasi-normality returned and Glad and I discuss the upcoming band rehearsal that he had to attend and the party that I was supposed to be going to in Illiya's place that evening. I tell Glad that I'm not really in the mood for a party and that if Robert doesn't reply to my text I probably won't bother going. We chatted some more before leaving and then go to catch the bus back into the center of Beograd. It was unseasonably warm and balmy for the time of year, almost like a punishment for us being so hungover and painfully photosensitive. On the bus ride into town Glad tells me that he feels really bad about what happened and that he thinks I will not regard him in the same way, that now our friendship is fucked up. I told him "no way brate", that "it was a weird drunken accident and I was just as much to blame, before the argument happened we had a great night, we sang Irish songs together and that is what I will remember of the night".

Over the few weeks after that night Glad and I gradually rebuilt our friendship. We both protested our guilt whenever the other tried to take the blame, but it also led to an elevated kind of understanding between us. I have had plenty of drunken arguments with friends in Ireland, bench weights being thrown and knives being produced in order to keep crazed alcoholic housemates out of my room. But these were usually followed up with macho bravado and a kind of pride in how fucked up a state we'd gotten ourselves into. These arguments back in Ireland would become joking anecdotes at parties (usually in the same 'party house' I lived in, in Drogheda for several years which regularly became the post-club extension of festivities), such as "hahah do you remember the time we

knocked you off a stool and broke your rib", or "do remember the time you shot me with the pellet gun". Sometimes there was a genuine rage in the arguments as occasionally occurs between very very close friends who have a tendency to wind each other up (or perhaps that's just my friends?). But afterward the fight would either become a joke or never be mentioned again. Not because of a sense of shame but usually because the fights were temporary, of the moment and almost expected.

However the argument with Glad left a very different emotional residue. At that stage we were partying quite a bit in Serbia, but the people I was hanging out with, really did not engage in rows and taunt each other to the extent that I was accustomed to in Ireland. With my friends in Ireland, trading insults to the point of violence is a playful and typical pastime, and occasionally a way to avoid intimacy and having to discuss emotional issues. Whereas the heavy drinking sessions amongst my Serbian friends and interlocutors brought us closer together; the guys became a bit more tactile, in fact much more so than in Ireland. This is in contradiction to some of the observations made concerning gender by Walser, where:

> Heavy metal is an arena of gender, where spectacular gladiators compete to register and affect ideas of masculinity, sexuality and gender relations. The stakes are high in metal as anywhere, and they are more explicitly acknowledged there, both in visual and musical tropes and in the verbal and written debates of fans. (1998:111-112)

There never seemed to be a need to show off with violence, or playful threats and one-up-manship. Humor and stories were the most important aspects of Serbian parties back in 2006. This is why the argument with Glad was so emotionally complicated; a few months later when we were able to joke about it I told Veliki Marko and Urok that it would have been less embarrassing if Glad and I had actually fucked each other! This is because it

was such an oddly emotive issue, and perhaps that stems not so much from the argument but from the aftermath, the way in which we both were so genuinely concerned for each other and careful about each others feelings (or egos?).

Perhaps one of the reasons why the argument left to such a strange emotional residue, stems from the an imaginary whereby, as Fiske points out:

> feminine intimacy centers on the relationship itself and produces a dependence on the other that threatens masculine independence... Male bonding, on the other hand, allows an interpersonal dependency that is goal centered, not relationship-centered, and thus serves masculine performance instead of threatening it. (Fiske in Walser :115)

The argument and its aftermath therefore, both threatened the relationship (although this was very quickly repaired), and it also threatened the communitas of the group. This is where the goal centered nature of the relationship is emphasized. On my part I had the dual goals of maintaining the friendships that I had built up, but also the need to continue researching the Serbian black metal scene. Whereas Glad felt a measure of guilt as the host that night, a role that he takes quite seriously and which cements his dual reputation as a key figure within the scene, and a host to people visiting Serbia with an interest in the scene.

It may seem that a good deal of effort is spent in this thesis discussing and theorizing black metal. This simply reflects the subject that we spent a huge amount of time engaged in while I stayed in Serbia, discussing that aspect of the music which exerts an almost magickal hold and such fanatical devotion. In each country this discussion of what constitutes black metal is different; with each individual it is also different. For example Skyforger from Latvia, begun as a black metal band singing about historic wars and other martial folk themes. As the years passed each subsequent Skyforger album

featured an increasing amount of folk instruments and themes, which eventually led to them releasing a fully acoustic album. Yet despite the patriotic/nationalistic aspects of many black metal bands, this to my knowledge does not result in a high level of tension between fans in countries whereby there is a historical antipathy. For example Krv (whose name means blood in Serbian) from Sarajevo were given a very welcome reception when they played support for Koldbrann (from Norway) in Beograd in 2006. This is despite the fact that not all of the band members are ethnic Serbs, instead Satanism and Slavic Paganism overrides the expectation of contemporary ethnic tension. The Stone have also played concerts in Croatia, and despite death threats sent to the band, the concerts were successful and the band was well received by fans.

Therefore at a time when the idea and substance of the nation is being eroded by the process of globalization, and the overproduction of sounds, images and text, a by-product and defining feature of contemporary modernity, exemplified by the amount of information available on the internet. Music scenes with a strong ethos of neo-tribal type identity and networks of creative belonging appear highly attractive to many young people, particularly young men. This is because they provide a focus, a peer group and a means of improving ones status within that peer group, as well as opening up the possibility of international travel through gigging and touring. Many people I met from Serbian bands had also met their romantic partners due to their status within bands. So as far as most of the guys I spoke to when asking the question, why black metal? The answer was obvious, "why the hell not"?

The following sections of this chapter will provide an insight into the attractions just mentioned, including a consideration of what is specific to the Serbian experience of

black metal that perhaps differs slightly from people's experience of the black metal scene in other countries.

War Metal, Anthro Genres and a Prestigious Proximity to Violence.

An underlying question that informed my research and provided the initial impetus to visit Serbia in 2006 was the question of how the sound structure of a style of music relates to the social structure of the people (Feld 1990). Having read Feld's ' *Sound and Sentiment'* this concept of sound relating to social and environmental structure is very appealing, especially in terms of applying it to an urban as opposed to a rainforest based genre of music as Feld had done (1990).

> Expressive modalities of weeping, poetics, and song, in their musical textual structure, are mirror representations of the symbolic circle constructed by the myth. (Feld 1990:14)

Most people would view black metal as a very escapist form of music rooted in fantasy imagination and romanticism. In this regard black metal is closer perhaps to Gothic styles as opposed to urban street based forms of music such as punk and rap/hip hop which often seek to criticize and reflect society. Though rather than treat this escapism as a form of removal or withdrawal from society, it is possible instead to view it as a reaction to society that is perhaps only possible in certain types of social environment.

Initially I was also curious to find out if the bands that feature members who fought or were involved in the Balkan conflicts, use these experiences as conceptual themes? Or did the music scene provide a form of escape from those harsh realities? However this was a difficult topic to address as the people I spoke to directly about their time in the army or involvement in conflicts were uncomfortable and reluctant to answer

questions. There are also ethical considerations in asking questions of this nature as this thesis is primarily concerned with music, and the people to whom I spoke had tended to keep this area very separated from other aspects of their lives. No one I spoke to used military service as a boastful form of cultural capitol. I was also conscious of not wishing to unnecessarily dredge up traumatic memories in people and reactions which are outside the scope of this research project. In keeping a coherent thread throughout this thesis it was necessary to limit the scope of inquiry. In doing this certain anthropological tropes/genres of writing were deliberately avoided. One particular omission was the trope of post-socialism which dominates a good deal of central and east European focused anthropology over the past two decades. Given the legacy of the Balkan wars and the unique character of Yugoslav socialism, comparisons to and the use of post socialist theory was deliberately avoided throughout this thesis in order to retain a people/scene centered analysis, as opposed to a political systems analysis. To bring in a post socialist discourse would involve radically changing the genred aspect of writing that is being deliberately cultivated here.

Normally a research project that deals with these issues will incorporate writing conventions that will allow for a sense of anonymity to be achieved. However given that there are so few black metal bands in the Balkans and the fact that The Stone and May result are two of the most successful bands, it would be virtually impossible to guarantee the kinds of anonymity required. The question of genre in anthropological writing is also an issue of concern

So rather than ask direct questions, which given the amount of time I was spending socializing and living with members of The Stone and May Result, would quickly result in people becoming impatient and with me becoming a nuisance, instead

attention was paid to what people discussed in relation to state violence over a longer period. Therefore as I spent more time in Serbia socializing and interacting with the scene, these questions tended to answer themselves in surprising ways and often indirect ways, or in other cases the kinds of questions that I considered asking seemed trivial and irrelevant as I came to know people better. In the case of guys I spoke to who had served in the army and now played in black metal bands, the music scene was undoubtedly a from of escape that offered a similar level of sociality and even a version of discipline as the military, but with the escapism that comes from belonging to a close knit band and creatively composed peer group.

  As music scenes go, black metal is particularly hierarchical, huge prestige and cultural capitol is accumulated by playing in successful bands, running record labels and any other activities that allow members to live and make a living within the scene, as opposed to making a living from non musical activities. During the war years in Serbia music scenes also offered an important link to the outside world, especially during the late nineteen nineties which was a time of increasing international isolation and a period during which NATO was bombing towns, cities and infrastructure. This had the affect of turning many Serbs against the 'West' and increasing support for the Milosevic regime, which had previously been in decline.

  I had previously spoken to Kozeljnik on one of my first visits to Serbia about the effects of the war on the music scene. Kozeljnik told me that during and after the war "bands stopped playing here and it became impossible for Serbian bands to tour the rest of the world, although in the past there were many famous rock bands from Yugoslavia". Kozeljnik stated that "Serbia was once very prosperous and now people are just lethargic as a result of bad politics, Milosevic was quite popular at first and just an ordinary

politician, there were some positive aspects to his presidency but all of that has been forgotten now". "I am very uncertain about the future now, everything actually seemed more positive in 2002 and even in 1996, yes we have more food but there is no longer a real middle class in the country and that is a dangerous thing". Kozeljnik also mentioned the relatively high cost of living in Serbia, the price of all the basic goods such as food, commodities and especially electricity have all raised sharply, whereas wages have more or less stayed the same during the last few years.

Kozeljnik stated that "this makes it difficult to promote the {music} scene, because people can't afford to buy CDs and concert tickets, but there is a lot of support for the scene even though people don't have much money, on Exit {festival} we {The Stone} played on the metal stage and there was maybe 500 people" "but on the last show we sold only 100 tickets", "the same was for *Sinister"* {a famous Death metal band from Holland}. Yet despite setbacks and people not having much disposable income to spend on the music scene, Kozeljnik was hopeful about the amount of new fans becoming interested in black metal, at "most gigs I would know perhaps 50 people", "so there are still many people coming into the scene, bands form and break up all the time and soon a new compilation will be released with songs from sixteen different Serbian black metal bands". This exchange took place during my first period of fieldwork in 2006 and over the preceding years music downloading has had a significant impact upon the sale of CDs by international and even local bands. Yet with live events the scene has continued to develop and attract many new fans, albeit with a degree of unpredictability and Kozeljnik and Urok have had a degree of success promoting concerts and booking bands from other European countries for gigs in Beograd and Novi Sad. This has allowed both individuals and to a lesser degree some of their friends to engage in work which is solely based on the

music scene (working in music shops), thus accumulating additional cultural capitol to that acquired from playing in bands.

Individuals who didn't live in cities with significant music scenes also managed to participate in both the Serbian and international metal scene. One day during my fieldwork in 2007 I was hanging out with a friend of one of my informants in a south-western town named Uzice. He told me that during their time in school, most people were obsessed with joining the army and caught up in the hyper-propaganda of the regime. My informant, we'll call him Grom, was always busy writing letters to pen pals and tape trading networks in Scandinavia and Germany. So whilst many of his classmates took solace in domestic commercial music in the form of Turbofolk. Grom was keeping up to date with the latest trends in foreign metal scenes and answering questions about life in the rogue state of Europe to curious metal fans from abroad. Despite the apolitical insularity of many metal scenes, they often provide a link to global-local movements and networks that an interest in mainstream music scenes wouldn't necessarily facilitate.

When Grom moved from Uzice to the capital Belgrade, his earlier tape trading brought him into contact with the local metal scene and provided a like minded community for him to interact with during his college years. This experience of networking and interacting with the metal scene led to him and Urok founding a small record label named Grom Records and they also promoted many local and international bands.

LOGO FROM GROM RECORDS WEBSITE.

Although the typical image of a black metal fan is of an introverted outsider, the experience of organizing and promoting activities came in very useful for Grom who played an active part in Serbia's protest movements, having often marched alongside the countries' former Prime Minister Gindzic before he was later assassinated. Grom himself one of the leaders of OTPOR (resistance) in Uzice and was later elected to a position in his local government for several years when I first met him, and is now in a senior position with a large local company in his hometown.

In thinking about what black metal and many other music scenes offer in relation to masculinity, the male dominated demographics of the scene must be taken into account. It has been well documented by scholars Weinstein, Walser and Kahn-Harris that the heavier forms of metal music in general are predominantly male oriented. The

explanations for this point to the general habitus and ways in which young men tend to socialize.

In a recent publication by sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris, he takes up Pierre Bourdieu's argument that "members of particular fields posses particular kinds of habitus" (Bourdieu in Kahn-Harris 2007:70), that produce certain dispositions, (that is) a sense of how to behave and what to expect in life (Kahn-Harris 2007:70). Therefore people entering into the black metal scene have a prior knowledge of what they are getting into and tend to know what to expect. Commenting on the appeal of heavy metal Weinstein, states

> Seen as an occupation, heavy metal is a serious and demanding struggle of committed and ambitious people who are also identified with and often devoted to a hedonistic life-style that reaches its peak in Dionysian ecstasy. (2000:60)

This is partially true and certainly an alluring factor but it is also tempered to a high level of 'actual' difficult repetitive work. Rehearsing, social networking, collecting, learning to play instruments, traveling to concerts are pursuits that require a high level of discipline. This is also confirmed by Walser's emphasis on power as a central focus and project that metal musicians are engaged in. At some points, this may efface the Dionysian fantasy by introducing the very real social/scene stratification that is an outcome of successfully laboring to become an accomplished metal musician (Walser 1993).

Mirroring the Social Norms and Homophobia.

In relation to its' male demographic, it would be quite unusual for a scene that places an aesthetic value on hatred and ideas of blasphemous misanthropy, not to propound intolerant distasteful and offensive rhetoric. Within the scene itself, there is

occasionally a critique of homophobic, sexist and racist discourses, but one that takes place within the parameters and habitus of black metal's terms of reference. This generally includes a strong emphasis on 'heteronormativity' and imaginaries that do not interrupt a typically understood patriarchal value system (Sarelin 2010:61).

> To question this norm involves a risk of loosing the sense of belonging to a specific accepted gender... The scene is predominantly heteronormative... I assume that if a person does not fit into the sexual norm in Finnish society, the same person will not fit into the norm within the Finnish black metal scene either. (Kahn-Harris & Sarelin in Sarelin 2010:63)

The stakes or what is up for grabs in relation to sexist behavior is therefore also determined within the scene, by what a person has to gain or loose in terms of a scene identity. If the over-arching aesthetic of the scene is Satanic – misanthropic and individualist, the contesting or pronouncement of sexist attitudes must attempt to find articulation within those terms of reference. Meaning that within the scene, certain abhorrent attitudes are regularly deployed, yet outside of the scene these attitudes are often contradicted in everyday practice. In the earlier account of play in hospitality that took place within the exchange with Veljko, utterances were analyzed in relation to 'play' (Huizinga 1955) and performative norms that arose out of expected roles. In the following section the performance of roles is again used as an optic to understand problematic utterances that could possibly undermine the heteronormative stance within black metal.

An example of this occurred during my fieldwork when I was hanging out in an apartment with three friends (names withheld). We were sitting around drinking beer and watching scenes on youtube.com in which members of the gay pride march in Belgrade were being attacked by skinheads. My friend said "what did they expect marching like that, of course people will attack them, I think they deserve it".

The context of the utterance must first be taken into account in order to understand it, we had been watching violent video clips, porn and black metal videos, throughout the evening, as well as drinking heavily and behaving in a fairly raucous manner. But I was still a bit shocked at my friends comment because only a few days previous there had been a gay brother of one of our friends visiting the apartment. During the visit they had been very welcoming and when he had left there had not been any untoward comments or expressions of homophobia. I wanted to criticize my friend but given the tone of the evening, I wanted to do so in a way that wasn't too preachy and in which neither of us would fall-out or loose face. So I said, "hey brate why do you think they deserve it"? My friend replied "because it's stupid marching, they knew they'd be attacked, why don't they just keep to themselves"?

I answered with a question, "do you call yourself a Satanist"? My friend looked at me, surprised, and replied "yes what does that have to do with anything"? I asked him, "well then why are you taking on the same opinion as some narrow minded priest who would condemn people because of their sexuality"? My friend laughed, seeing the point but not wanting to give in, he said "haha fuck you man"? I replied suggestively "yeah you'd love too wouldn't ya".

The tension was broken and we started joking and making sexually suggestive gestures toward one another. A point had been raised and then 'played' with in a manner slightly similar to, but by no means as prolonged as the exchange with Veljko (discussed earlier in chapter 2). Later when we were alone he said "hey man you know I don't really give a fuck about gays"? I asked him what he meant by this and he replied "well, I agree with you, people should be able to fuck whoever they want without being attacked".

Ok so my friend isn't likely to become a gay rights activist anytime soon, but this incident does serve as an example of a small shift in outlook for someone within an unusually conservative music scene, within an even more conservative and deeply heteronormative country. As illustrated in chapter 2. in relation to play and hospitality, this was an example of compromise and taking on board the other persons position. Here this took place in a quieter moment after the initial threat to a heteronormative mindset had happened. However those few acquiescent few words do signify a shift towards thinking about gender within another frame of reference i.e. ideas about Satanism and indulgence, as opposed to a Christian/nationalist imaginary in which challenges to heteronormativity are deeply unwelcome.

Although relations between females and males could be considered quite egalitarian in Serbia, due to the years under communism and a demographic trend that features a higher number of females to males within most age categories. There are strongly defined gender differences and behaviors for Serbs, much more so than in Ireland. The concept of the metro-sexual male is one that really hasn't taken hold and in general, males who do pay a conspicuous amount of attention to grooming would tend to risk exposing themselves to mild criticism and ridicule.

This criticism cannot be understood in isolation to issues outside of gender, there is also a strong concept of class associated with what people call 'fancy', meaning expensive clothes. Although there is no particular stigma associated with wearing designer labels, (most of them being domestic imitations anyway), the wearing of expensive jewelry and flashy clothes, and bling, would often be associated with Serbian gangster culture. Which, although it has receded in recent years, was absolutely rife during the nineteen nineties.

One day whist walking past an orthodox church with a friend we saw two men with military types builds, wearing expensive suits and gold crucifixes around their necks. they both paused in front of the church, blessed themselves and kissed their crucifixes. My friend gestured towards them and said "these are the type of people who support our glorious church, fancy gangsters with a lot of money". This alluded to what people have informed me of the close relationship between Serb paramilitaries, organized crime, politics and the church. For many men in Serbia, patriotism and ideas of masculinity are closely associated with the church and as an institution it is rapidly gaining power and influence it had lost during Serbia's years as a communist country. During the war many orthodox priests played active roles in the military and were instrumental in propagating anti-Muslim propaganda in Bosnia and Kosovo. For many Serbian men during the nineties their first contact with the church only came as they were being baptized and sent to fight on the front (Judah 2000).

Images of well known gangster 'Knele' and other men conspicuously displaying orthodox crosses and the Serbian national crest

(http://www.dodirnime.com/forums/display_topic/id_1087/ **accessed on 26/03/09).**

The various interpretations of events in this chapter with an emphasis on gendered interaction, are of course amenable to alternative readings. Given that the analysis here took place within a small group of people, there is a limit to which these conclusions are relevant to the wider black metal scene. This is both a strength and weakness of ethnography which uses gender as an analytical lens. As it is an area of study that is so informed by the researchers background and vantage point that it risks doing a disservice to those who come under its gaze.

CHAPTER 5.

At the Heart of Europe: Festival Comparisons and EU Imaginaries.

On the 25th of August 2007 when Sibiu in Romania was celebrating its status as the European Capital of Culture, an event took place just several kilometers from the center, in which hundreds of young music fans came together for a Pagan Metal music festival. Although a largely peaceful affair, this quasi-private music festival was an example of the mixing of music and extreme right wing/neo-nationalist politics, with hundreds of fans chanting 'seig heil' in unison with the bands performing.

The idea for the title of this chapter derived from a consideration of the various contests for meaning and identity that take place at a micro and macro level in European discourse. Given both the legacy of extreme nationalism in Europe and a perception of increasing homogenization under EU enlargement the forms of collective effervescence that nationalism once offered no longer hold the same mass appeal. Music scenes in certain instances have formed in a manner that taps into a need amongst young people for intense forms of belonging, whilst at the same time transcending traditional local and national ties. Therefore this chapter can be read as both an endorsement of ethnographic forms of inquiry and a tongue in cheek return to anthropological writing which searches for the exotic/other, but in familiar places. Since the decline of Communism and the increasing flexibility of EU borders and cheap travel fares, central and East European countries have been largely demystified. Therefore the references below to Bram Stoker's magnum opus (1997) is intended here in a purely playful spirit in order provide a measure

of descriptive irony and commentary on some of the ways in which Balkan regions have been represented in the past.

This and the following chapter are based on trips to two music festivals that took place during late August and September 2007. The first festival, Frey Faxi took place in the picturesque town of Sibiu (Hermanstadt) in central Romania, which at the time was celebrating its status as the European Capitol of Culture. The second festival; Dunkelheit took place in Brno in the Czech Republic (see chapter, the Gift and Collective Effervescence).

Several themes shall be merged in this chapter which is based primarily on travel writing/ethnographic observations, movement through road/landscapes and the conditions of possibility that meant a music festival with strong neo-nazi elements could take place, in relatively unchallenged conditions in Romania. The descriptions in this chapter will be quite detailed, moving back and forth from observation, to reminiscence, and to analysis; in order to build up a detailed sketch of a type of event, and the expectation felt leading to the event. This is undertaken in order to demystify a music scene that is generally only observed online or in print and to give the reader an insight into the appeal that these events hold for their adherents. The early sections of this chapter also form what could be more accurately described as a musing upon (rather than an analysis of), the experience and perception of moving across two EU countries and the expectation of homogeneity and otherness. This chapter also includes snippets of conversation and the observations made by a friend who flew out from Ireland in order to accompany me to Romania. The observations are included because they helped to de-personalize the analysis, and on a whimsical note, stop taking the black metal scene as seriously as I had been taking it up to that point. By this, is not intended to deride or demean the scene, but rather to use humor

and irony to shed light on problematic aspects of musical expression that are otherwise dealt with through a haze of moral outrage, and political activism which seeks to destroy rather than understand the phenomenon. This focus away from morality, has allowed for some comparisons to older forms of (mostly) male collective expressions of extremist political views and macho bonding.

At this point in the research I was also becoming intrigued about the mystique and deviant prestige attached to the national socialist black metal scene. Therefore I wanted to test the hypothesis; that if, as rock n roll chroniclers have often maintained, the devil has all the best tunes, well then surely Satanic Nazi music must sound fantastic, after all isn't it one of the most taboo forms of music in Europe?

I had decided to attend these festivals, in part for the enjoyment of some of the bands who despite their questionable political leanings, are musically very appealing, with a powerful pagan metal sound, that easily lends itself to raucous singing along and carousing. Although the ethos or values of the scene are different, the actual activities and way in which alcohol, music and camaraderie are central to the experience, are not so different to punk and mainstream metal scenes. These NS bands were often played at parties in Serbia (Nokturnal Mortum also played a concert with The Stone in Serbia), so this was also an opportunity to explore some of the Pan-Slavic links between the Serbian and other black metal scenes in central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In writing these following chapters based on events that took place outside of my main 'ethnographic' area, there was an opportunity to describe events that are connected to the wider black metal scene, but not necessarily connected to my main informants. Therefore these sections are a chance to speak a bit more freely and generalize, without being bound by as

many ethical restraints and the need to protect the identity of named individuals, as is the case when describing events that took place amongst my main interlocutors in Serbia. With the exception of some of the band names and the friend who accompanied me to Sibiu, there are no named individuals mentioned in this chapter who could be identified with anything potentially dangerous or illegal. Although the band names have been mentioned in connection to this festival, this is information that is now freely available on the internet, therefore the only thing being exposed here, is the experience of being at the festival and the efforts undertaken to get there. The emphasis here is on exploring the meaning of participation, and the capacity to express or embody extremist ideologies through situation, contextual awareness and conditions of possibility inherent in a place or space. Basically, what is/was it about the location of a music festival (featuring national socialist black metal bands) that allowed bands and fans to freely and publicly express sentiments that are virtually unspeakable in neighboring countries such as the Czech Republic and Germany?

Having grown up in Ireland, during a time when there was a complete change in the economic and social composition of many parts of the country, which was to a large degree spearheaded by the adoption of EU membership, policies, infrastructural grant aid, and the changes in behavior and regulation that this brought about. I was curious to see the effects of EU membership (albeit on as superficial level that a flying road trip can ever reveal) on Romania as it had recently joined the EU. At this point in 2007 my last visit to Romania was something of a pilgrimage undertaken in order to visit Poinari fortress on Halloween in 1998. Poinari fortress is a seldom visited and isolated ruin in the Carpathian Mountains (outside the town of Curtea De Arges) where Vlad Tepes the Romanian Voivode on whom Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was based, had once lived.

Before the trip in 1998 I knew very little about Romania, but throughout the trip I became deeply impressed by the almost medieval landscape and ways of living that we encountered outside of the main towns and cities. There was also a sense of hospitality and friendliness that left a lasting impression upon me. This struck me as being a type of hospitality that is often boasted about by An Bord Failte (The Irish Tourist Promotion Board/QUANGO), but (increasingly) is rarely ever experienced, at least to the degree which I experienced in Romania.

As in Ireland, the most visible manifestations of EU membership were/are often observable in the roads and infrastructure. Changes in attitude are always much harder to discern, but the simple fact that such a large national socialist black metal festival was taking place in Romania, seemed to me an indicator that legislation against hate speech, and racism etc was slow to take hold or at least was not being policed to the degree that it is in Czech republic (Murphy 2010) (on the back of the ticket stubs for Dunkelheit festival in Brno there was an explicit warning that the display of political symbols and gestures, fascist or communist, could result in the attendee being ejected from the venue and the police being informed). Not that this is necessarily an automatic outcome of EU membership but it is of relevance given that the EU project was in part conceived with a view to avoiding the types of extreme nationalist discourse that led to previous conflicts. True, this can only be a partial and superficial look at a phenomena, but at the same time it is worthy of account, as live performances, although fleeting and temporal, can have profound and lasting effects on those participating.

This quality in music is recognized and expressed in the following statement by William Pierce (author of the so called right wing bible/how to lead a white revolution

manual, *The Turner Dairies*), in an interview during which he discussed the significance of Resistance Records, a label which promotes right wing music:

> Music speaks to us at a deeper level than books or political rhetoric: music speaks directly to the soul. Resistance Records ... will be the music of our people's renewal and rebirth. It will be music of strength and joy for our people. It will be music of defiance and rage against the enemies of our people.... It will be the music of the great, cleansing revolution, which is coming. Enjoy it. (Pierce quoted in Davisson 2010:191).

This was also something completely different to the ethos that I experienced within the Serbian black metal scene, but at the same time it is also connected through a shared international audience and circuit of contacts, fans, bands, small record labels and promotional agencies.

Although there are few distinctions made between black metal and national socialist black metal amongst my friends and interlocutors in Serbia, there does not exist within the Serbian black metal scene, any noticeable politically active dimension to the music. Despite socializing with the skinhead scene, the black metal fans (at least to my knowledge) have not taken part in any of the violent actions that some of the skinheads have been involved in (a few of which had been brought to my attention in 2007). It must also be pointed out, that although some individuals within the Serbian bands and scene are fans of national socialist black metal music, The Stone and May Result, (despite drawing heavily upon aspects of volkish mythology) are absolutely not; national socialist black metal bands. This was evident not only in conversations with band members but also in their use of overtly Satanic and sometimes nihilistic themes on their current albums which is an important distinction that sets them apart from Pagan Front affiliated bands. Bands associated with the Pagan Front tend to be overtly national socialist, Temnozor, Nokturnal Mortum from Ukraine, and Graveland from Poland (who formed during the nineteen

nineties using Satanic themes), have gradually veered away from a Satanic iconography, instead favoring only Pagan themes based on their own countries Slavic mythology. Another indicator of this move by national socialist black metal bands away from the murky world of Satanic nihilism is expressed more forcefully in the text of the Pagan Front's website (an organization to whom the aforementioned bands are aligned) which can be summarized as follows, 'the Pagan Front condemns nihilism, suicide and self harm as inherently weak, and any bands promoting this are not aligned to the Pagan Front. It is perhaps a cruel irony that the Pagan Front has aspects of self-discipline, worship of nature and self-respect that are positively wholesome in comparison to the Satanic nihilism of Scandinavian black metal, whereby bands such as Mayhem and Shining feature blood drinking and self-cutting as a prominent aspect of their stage shows (See chapter on The Gift & Collective Effervescence).

Pagan Front image scanned from www.paganfront.com on 29/12/1010.

The (Re)Ascent of Orthodoxy.

Ethically speaking, the decision not identify my Serbian interlocutors (where possible) with contentious ideologies is not simply because people do not wish to be named or associated with such statements. Within the bands The Stone and May Result,

there is no dominant political consensus and politics is rarely if ever discussed, with the exception being a generalized dislike of the Serbian political elite and mainstream politics in general. Most discussions of politics tend to involve events that took place in the late 1990s – early 2000s and the repercussions of wider political decisions and alliances against Serbia.

Instead and perhaps this is based more on personal (but relevant) paranoia rather that rational appraisal, during my few years going back and forth to Serbia and corresponding with friends and informants, it was/is becoming apparent that the Serbian Orthodox church is rapidly regaining the power and influence it had lost during the Yugoslav communist era. Each year during my visits, the gargantuan Sveti Sava (Temple of St Sava, or the Big Toilet as members of The Stone refer to it), one of the largest orthodox cathedrals in the world (similar in size and shape to Hagia Sofia) was coming closer to completion (construction began in the 1940s) and also becoming increasingly more ostentatious. Andrei Simic identifies the building of Sveti Sava as an example of competing nationalisms, as the Catholic Church were gaining a strong influence in the Balkans following the 'visitations' by the Virgin Mary in Medjugorie:

> This phenomenon was quickly co-opted by the Franciscans, a Catholic order which had embraced the pro-nazi state of Croatia during World War II. At about the same time, construction began in Belgrade on what was to be the largest Orthodox church in the Balkans. Its dedication to St Sava, the Patron of Serbia, clearly underscored its nationalist implications. Both these events heralded the emergence into the public arena of religion as an ethnic marker after more than four decades of semi-obscurity under the Titoist regime. (Simic 2002:136)

So too were a rash of new orthodox churches springing up in urban and rural areas where housing developments were being completed. In 2007 there was also a tax levied on postage stamps which went directly into the coffers of the Orthodox Church.

People I spoke to in Serbia would regularly gossip and make jokes concerning the power, wealth and cunning of the orthodox clergy whilst at the same time shifting the tone of speech after the joke in order to make it clear that there was a serious point being made. One joke that stands out was told to me by my friend Marko from Uzice, it refers to the widespread perception of greed within the clergy and goes as follows;

A man is walking past a flooded river when he came across a priest who was drowning. The man shouted to the priest 'give me your hand, quick give me your hand'. The priest refused and was swept away in the flood. Later when he told the story to his wife she cried, 'you fool, you should have GIVEN him your hand, don't you know not to ever ask a priest to give you something!'

These genres of 'priest' jokes also have class and sometimes gendered elements to them, (see chapter on gender and masculinity). However the salient point of these jokes and stories was to express the fact that the Orthodox Church over the past few years is becoming a dominant moral authority with a growing input into education healthcare and politics. This has taken place not only amongst people in rural areas which has traditionally been the case, but also in Beograd and other cities, where tough young men in particular are adopting orthodox Christianity as a patriotic and macho facet of Serbian masculinity.

One of the stories that made the headlines during 2006 was of a shooting which took place in a graveyard by a mentally unstable individual. After the police had apprehended him they searched his apartment and it was reported that they had found a number books on occult literature and a copy of *The Satanic Bible* by Anton La Vey. Soon afterward there were statements made by government officials and senior clergy to the effect that they wanted the police to conduct surveillance and 'round up' people who were

'Satanists'. Most people in the black metal scene laughed this off, but Kozeljnik who is generally quite contemplative and analytical spoke to me about it in a more earnest and serious manner than the others. He (Kozeljnik) stated that, "yes I know it sounds funny, a crazy Satanic killer, but this could be very bad, you never know when they might do something to people involved in black metal", "the police here are very powerful and could make things very difficult", "at the moment they know nothing about black metal, they just think of it the same as heavy metal". It was partially this statement by Kozeljnik, and a growing awareness of what is and is not possible in different EU and non-EU countries that brought to mind the issue of national imaginaries and national taboos, and the manner in which the various sub-genres and activities of the wider black metal scene responds to and are shaped by these imaginaries. Therefore in exploring what is so Serbian about Serbian black metal, it is important also to experience concerts in surrounding countries and take note of the possibilities that the staging of these types of concerts presents in terms of ethos, behavior and style.

Jesus Rats, and Moral Outrage.

A similar (re)assertion of (Roman Catholic) church power has also occurred in Slovenia, most notably in the events surrounding the controversy attached to the band Strelnikoff and their use of what was perceived to be a blasphemous image as one of their album covers, described by Mursic in the article '*Provocation and Repression after Socialism: The Strelnikoff Case*' (2000). At the center of this assertion/revealing of the church's position in Slovenia was Archbishop Franc Rode, who in 1997 demanded the right for the church to control religious education in schools and also stated "whoever wishes the Slovenian nation well, whoever wants to be unambiguously a true Slovenian,

must be a Christian or at least marked by a Christian culture" (Sermon in Brezje, May 1997, quoted in Mursic 2000:309). The Strelnikoff case raises many issues regarding freedom of expression and tolerance, but the salient point here is the extent to which the controversy revealed the position of the church. Previously the church had been reasserting its power and sense of moral authority; however the Strelnikoff case forced a conflict to take place between the church and secularists that revealed positions in an epistemic manner, and provided a visibility to social fault lines that had previously been less discernible. Although such a poignant standoff between the church and a music scene in Serbia has yet to come to widespread attention, similar fault lines exist and a similar tension between secularists and the Orthodox Church contain many of the same points of contention. However the gaze of the state is felt much more keenly in Serbia and the repercussions of outright and publicly noticeable blasphemy would be much more severe should as similar a case as the Strelnikoff one ever make the transition from subculture to popular culture.

The Embodiment of Place and Possibilities for Expression.

On a lighter note however, this trip to the festival in Romania was also an occasion to take a break from Serbia and my fieldwork and catch up with a close friend from home, who was flying out to Budapest in order to meet me. We had both been looking forward to catching up with each other and were glad of an excuse to rent a big conspicuous car and take it on a trip through the Transylvanian mountains at a pace that was considerably faster than Jonathon Harker's coach ride in the *Dracula* novel (Stoker 1998), on whose route we were inadvertently following.

At this stage in 2007 I was well into the second year of my fieldwork and was beginning to gain a depth of familiarity and knowledge of the Serbian black metal scene, to the extent that at this point, I decided to try and engage in some 'in the crowd type' comparisons to metal events taking place in the same overall scene but in the surrounding countries. Having attended countless gigs, metal nights, band rehearsals and parties, the Serbian scene had become reasonably predictable, comfortable and 'normal'. At the majority of events I was attending I knew who would be there, who would get drunk first, who was most likely to hold court on a particular subject, and who would be the first to crowd surf at a concert (an often heroic but painful endeavor when there was not enough people in the crowd to support a persons weight). Basically the routine of the scene was becoming familiar and a bit more difficult to write about with the same sense of enthusiasm, but it was no less enjoyable to experience. Therefore the trip to Transylvania was also a chance to inject some novelty into the research and avoid coming to conclusions about a wider Slavic black metal scene based only on my experiences in Serbia. So after much 'deep hanging out', I was starting to yearn for novelty, spectacle and a renewed sense of the familiar 'other' that occurs at a live performance, but I wanted this in an unfamiliar location.

Arrangements had been made for me to meet Simon, who is a close friend living in Dublin and running a motorcycle shop, but originally he is an 1977 era punk from London and a refugee of the poll tax riots which had necessitated his having to make a hasty exit to Ireland. Having another person with me who is quite familiar with the metal scene, but more at home in the punk scene was useful in terms of asking questions and inviting comparisons that I may not have noticed for one reason or another. Simon has always tended to hold strong anarchistic principles, but at the same time has mellowed

enough to be able to enjoy the sound and spectacle of the many black metal concerts I had dragged him to over the past few years, without necessarily judging the bands based on perceived ideologies. This has often been the case with many of my politically left-oriented friends, who favor subcultures whereby bands must conform to the hearer's sense of musical political correctness in order for the music to be enjoyed. I was also glad to have another person with me in case there was any kind of trouble or violence, as the NSBM scene was still kind of new to me and something of an unknown variable in terms of whether or not these events were violent. Recent scholarship on the political aspects of CEE (central and east European) NS and skinhead movements states that:

> The significance of the skinheads lies not so much in the actions of their organizations as in the threat of its members. In fact the skinhead subculture in these countries has become recognized nationally and internationally as a problem, most notably because if its high level of violence. (Mudde 2005:168 – 169)

Diversions aside, although Simon is very much an anarcho-punk (grappling with the dilemma of being an employer and running a successful motorbike business), he actually looks the part of a tough old English skinhead, with barb wire neck tattoos and various Indian ink tattoos on his arms and hands. Therefore in the paranoid imaginary scenario I had rehearsed in my head, we both looked as though we would fit in amongst a crowd of Nazi-skinheads and have enough familiarity with the black metal and Oi-punk scenes to be able to chat to people and ask and answer the kind of questions that people use when trying to learn about someone based on their musical preferences. This is the reason for including in this chapter a short description of a conversation that took place at a small gig in Budapest, in order to demonstrate the quasi-ritualistic pleasantries of getting to know someone and form judgments; based on asking questions that to varying degrees reveal something about the person through their musical tastes (scene habitus).

Although all this attention to fitting in sounds a bit paranoid, it was not without good reason. Frey Faxi Festival is not an event that any ordinary member of the public can just buy tickets to and attend. In order to attend one must receive an invitation to buy tickets by participating on the internet forums of the Pagan Front, an organization of indeterminate size but with links (at least on their websites) to extreme right-wing or neo-nationalist and national socialist organizations around Europe and the United States. This convoluted method of researching a subject and obtaining tickets for the Frey Faxi festival produced something of an ethical dilemma as I am generally of the opinion that people have a right not to be studied. However scholars have also pointed to the lack of research into the area of extremist politics in the central and east European areas, Mikenberg (in Mudde 2005:161) has noted "studying the radical right in transformation countries in central and eastern Europe not only resembles shooting at a moving target but also shooting with clouded vision". Mudde also states that there is a "poignant lack of reliable information on racist extremism in the region, both academic and non academic" (2005:161).

Other factors that have been alluded to by Banks in ' *Neo-nationalism in Europe & Beyond*' (2006:60) are the "mental-hygienic issues to consider in contemplating fieldwork with members of or subscribers to neo-nationalist movements". However this statement in itself should strike anthropologists as problematic. For example, how often is mental-hygiene a consideration when studying any other group of people with strongly held and expressed beliefs? If anything statements such as the above point to the need for more engaged ethnographic research into the cultural aspects of neo-nationalist groups, as opposed to the armchair anthropologist technique of relying on entirely on published sources, as is the case in works such as ' *Neo-nationalism in Europe and Beyond'* (Banks

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2006). Another interesting, but slight diversion from the main point, is the idea which was raised by Bourgois in an article about the ethics of openness and transparency and how these may play into the hands of repressive regimes (2007). Here Bourgois addresses the issue of so called apolitical anthropology by asking the question, "how does one investigate power relations and fulfill the researchers obligation to obtain consent from the powerful" (2007:290). However in the case of Frey Faxi the issue is complicated further; considering the fact that extreme right wing political groups of the kind considered here are in fact a marginal social minority, but one which treats 'whiteness' as a category of being that is inherently privileged and elite. Therefore in this case, the 'end justifies the means' is the weak but cogent argument put forward for engaging in this piece of covert research, as it is anticipated that in general it falls under the 'does no harm category of research'. Therefore as a researcher I simply could not let this opportunity to study the recreational side of extremist politics slip by as events of this type and at such close proximity, have to the best of my knowledge not been documented by any other anthropologists. The majority of research into national socialist black metal has tended only to focus on song lyrics, symbolism, websites, and media statements, as opposed to understanding the dynamics of interaction and performance as theory in practice.

However the first few emails that I sent to the Pagan Front using a profile on their internet forum, in which I identified myself as an anthropology student and fan of black metal interested in writing about the scene in general, resulted in my profile on the forum being deleted. When a few more attempts to ask questions and set up profiles using the same email addressed resulted in further profile deletions, I decided to use a new email address and simply participate on the forums as a 'normal' member and not ask questions about politics or ideology. After a week or two of participating on the forums, asking

about bands, discussing Celtic and Slavic mythology (but avoiding overtly political forum threads in which I would have been obliged to either lie or question peoples points of view) and other fairly innocuous stuff I was sent an email with a flier for Frey Faxi and given an email address to write to, from which I could request tickets for Frey Faxi. I arranged all of this from Serbia in the weeks leading up to the festival and instead of having tickets posted to the address I was staying at in Serbia (and possibly triggering unwanted attention toward my hosts), I requested that the tickets be made available for collection at the entrance to the festival.

Having made all of the arrangements for the Frey Faxi over the internet whilst in Serbia, I then took the overnight train from Beograd and met Simon in Budapest on the 28th of August 2007. Being more interested in live music than typical pubs and clubs we quickly managed to find a gig to check out by going to some record shops and tattoo studios which had concert fliers displayed on their walls. This is a method which I have always tended to use when looking for some interesting music based events, when visiting foreign cities. These are the kinds of informal places where you can not only view the posters but also ask about the quality of the bands and venues. These places tend to be the most important hubs in terms of scene specific sources of information. They also have a tendency to be a bit more reliable than simply using the internet, which often contains a good deal of promotion for something which may have very little actual interest. These hubs and hang-out type businesses are potentially much better sources, as you can speak directly to people who may know the organizers and bands etc. and thus avoid turning up to an (non)event in some nerdy teenagers basement, simply because the flier or web source looked appealing.

That evening Simon and I attended a mini death, grind, and hardcore music festival in a venue which had previously housed an old cinema, and in a grimy but practical manner still retained some of the old fixtures but very little of the original ambiance. Instead it was a place typical of youth oriented alternative music venues, with a slightly dingy run down, communal squat type vibe, where cheap booze and a tolerance towards unorthodox smoking substances made it a popular venue with small to mid-size non-mainstream bands.

The bands playing that night (Gilded Cradle, Human Error, Yack, Hxaxs, Holocaust Cannibal and Another Way) were interesting, if a little generic in terms of style and sound, but there was a friendly crowd and we found ourselves mingling and being introduced to a pleasant cross section of metal heads, punks and generally enthusiastic music freaks. To my surprise, a guy who had asked if he could take a photograph of my tattoo (a human-like skull with wide horns which is used as a logo by singer Glenn Danzig's various musical incarnations from his time in the Misfits and Samhain to his present solo projects), introduced me to another native of Budapest who also shares my surname, Murphy! We then engaged in the usual pleasantries of discussing bands, waffling animatedly at the bar, shouting above the din of the band and crowds, declaring our undying love for the Misfits and Danzig and recommending other lesser known bands with a similar style. Before long we were buying each other beer and the other Murphy was trying to convince me of the underrated merits of a potent (but in my opinion vomit inducing) Hungarian spirit called Unicom. After a few minutes of conversation discussing Serbian and Hungarian metal bands, we realized that we both knew an individual from the Hungarian metal scene. A singer named Bolash from a Hungarian band named Tesstimony who had come to stay with Glad in Beograd and had partied with us in Novi

Sad for a few days also. We then exchanged email addresses and discussed useful sources of scene related info and bands to check out. This method of data sharing seems to be one of the most predominant within the metal scene in general and is often a means for non-musicians to demonstrate their 'scenic' (cultural) capitol. In this case a short conversation revealed people we knew in common which amply demonstrated the glocalized connectedness of European metal scenes.

In most instances this info sharing is quite good natured and helps to create bonds between scene members from different countries, but on occasion it can turn into a slightly comical form of one-upmanship, not dissimilar to joking and story telling in Irish pubs, as described by Henry Glassie (1995). These discussions are also a way to meet people, communicate sociably and sustain a long animated conversation, without having to resort to discussions of the mundane, such as weather, work or families. Therefore this quasi-ritualized form of info-sharing creates and maintains people's statuses and roles within music scenes, by using their knowledge of music as a matrix of indexical communication. However music scenes such as black metal are also deeply occult (meaning that which is hidden from the uninitiated, as opposed to anything magickal) in practice as they depend on forms of exclusive insider knowledge and experience that must be learned and acquired and as such is difficult to simply immitate. Although on another level these types of scenes are perhaps no different from the social interactions and benefits that accrue from belonging to an exclusive golf club. Just like the golf club this insider etiquette can also function to exclude membership from, and expose outsiders, pretenders and poseurs.

In the wider metal scene, exclusivity and occultish membership aesthetics are harmless enough, but these notions had been a bit of a worry and at the forefront of my

mind during my preparations for a NSBM festival such as Frey Faxi. This led me to preparing several compilation CD's of national socialist black metal bands for Simon to listen and become familiar with to on the drive to Sibiu in order to facilitate some scenic knowledge that might be required at Frey Faxi.

After a pleasant two days in Budapest, Simon and I set off for Romania in our renter Chrysler PT Cruiser. We left Budapest early in the morning, I was desperately clutching bottles of energy drink and praying to ancient pagan gods for a miracle hangover cure. Simon the teetotaler (of two years at that point) was alert, curious and keen to see something of the Hungarian countryside. The car which was heavy and slow in urban environments came into its own on the motor-ways, and we made rapid progress across one of the main routes towards Romania, which eventually leads on towards Istanbul. (Un)fortunately it was difficult to see or experience anything other than speed and efficiency traveling across Hungary. The motor-ways keep travelers well out of the towns and at times we could have been in any EU country in Europe (with the exception of western Ireland). Only the occasional sign or advertisement betrayed the fact that we were moving at a rapid pace across Hungary.

The drive across Hungary was very straightforward, predictable and as efficient as one generally expects in most EU countries (parts of Ireland being the exception to that rule). There was good road signage, plenty of petrol stations and adequate information that facilitated the kind of 'moving through a non-anthropological space' type of experience that Marc Auge (1995) describes. The non-anthropological space phenomenon has been characterized by Auge as the conveyor-belt-like sensation of moving through a place and having no personalized interaction with the people you encounter (1995). Perhaps this is similar to the stone faced bureaucracy one occasionally experiences at

central European borders, but without the mind numbing boredom anticipation and waiting times.

The traveler's interaction with the Hungarian landscape and people has certainly changed since Jonathan Harker's fictional journey (1998). Upon crossing the border from Hungary into Romania, the difference between the two countries became noticeable immediately. I was beginning to yearn for smoky taverns in which people would get nervous when we spoke of our destination, and warn us of vampires and other dangers that lurked in Transylvania. Perhaps this may also have occurred if we told people in smokey taverns that we were on our way to a neo-nazi festival, but the opportunity never arose. After the border crossing, the change of countries was particularly apparent through the bumpy transition from Hungarian EU efficiency and non-anthropological space, to Romanian roads in disarray, damaged signage and a funny, frightening and chaotic approach to driving, not too dissimilar to driving styles in Serbia. The land and town-scapes too, were quite different from the relatively affluent Hungary with its well marked signs and a degree of predictability and efficiency that makes the place 'feel European' (in terms of EU membership).

This 'feeling' is one that has can be described as a kind of quasi-homogeneity, whereby a sense of efficiency and recognizable standards gradually become the norm as a result of EU membership. These to many people are the most visible markers and signifiers of EU membership (arrival) in terms of investment in state infrastructure and other standardized signifiers such as road signage and sameness of 'roadscape' (as opposed to landscape). These tend to increase in frequency depending on the level of inward investment.

For the purpose of this chapter the concept of 'feeling' like an EU country will also take into account the possibility of racist action and agitation. Romania is a country where "serious outbursts of racist extremist violence have occurred at a few occasions but overall the level is not that high", (this level was decreasing in 2005) (Mudde 2005:173). In a study of politics and racist extremism in central and Eastern Europe, Mudde has grouped countries into three specific categories:

A.   Countries where racist extremist occurrences are "absent or highly incidental. This group includes the three Baltic states" (Mudde 2005:173).

B.   "Countries where racist extremist violence does occur but is not (yet)" frequent or widespread, such as Slovenia (Mudde 2005:173). Romania is characterized by more serious outbursts of racist extremist violence occurring on a few occasions' "but overall the level is not that high and, importantly is decreasing" (Mudde 2005:173).

C.   In the third category are countries considered to have high levels of racist violence which are thought of as a "structural and long term problem" (Mudde 2005:173). These countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. In most of these countries "the skinhead movement is the main perpetrator of racist attacks", with Bulgaria being the exception (Mudde 2005:173).

Further a field in Russia the situation of racist extremism seems worse than in Central Europe, as this quote from Davisson illustrates:

> The large number of NSBM and NS affiliated metal bands in Russia could also be reflective of general population's attitude around race. In the two decades following end of the Soviet Union, Russia's racism became public. The Moscow based Sova Center for Human Rights reported:
> In the spring of 2007, radical violence continued to grow. Over the three

spring months, xenophobic and neo-nazi attacks affected at least 137 people, killing 18…there are no reasons yet to report improvement. (2010:196)

With Romania being a country in which attacks against gypsies and other ethnic minorities are common, being chosen as a location for Frey Faxi festival, I was curious as to what bearing (if any) this would have on the behavior of people at the event. For example at concerts I have attended in Germany, Holland and the UK whereby there was an NS presence in the crowd, I have never witnessed anyone making nazi salutes or chants. Whereas in Slovenia and Serbia, I have witnessed this taking place amongst some young black metal fans and skinheads, but this was not reciprocated or even appreciated by the bands to which it was directed. In contrast, at the festival (Dunkelheit) in Brno in the Czech Republic which I attended soon after Frey Faxi, it was explicitly stated on ticket stubs, that any outward political expressions, badges, t-shirts etc (whether fascist or communist) were expressly prohibited and could result in expulsion from the festival and the police being called. So it would appear that in countries which have and enforce anti-racist/fascist legislation, these prohibitions do actually have noticeable effects on the conditions of possibility for extremist expression at black metal concerts.

One of the aspects of living in Serbia that 'felt' noticeably different to living in Ireland or most other EU countries was the fact that after several of my first weeks living in Beograd and experiencing weekly searches and questionings by the police. I began to actively 'feel' the gaze of the state in a manner which I never had felt, anywhere else. For the majority of 'law abiding' Irish citizens the gaze of the state is generally felt most keenly from behind the wheel of a car, or when considering dropping a piece of litter on the streets or smoking in a place of employment. However this has taken place largely through promotional campaigns and the threat of enforcement, as opposed to frequent

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interactions with actual living enforcers. This means that there is a reasonable degree of consensus as to right and wrong, and a definite knowledge and acceptance that activities such as drink driving, speeding or smoking in a pub are not only illegal, but strictly taboo. It must also be taken into account that a re-constituted sense of value which is attached to the breaking of taboos also occurs through their creation.

At metal concerts and festivals that I have attended in Serbia and to an extent Slovenia, the gesture of a Nazi salute is one of these taboos which are by no means absolute; they are occasionally made jokingly amongst friends as greetings, but also amongst drunken music fans as gestures of appreciation towards bands. The typical reaction from the rest of the crowd is sometimes to ignore or deride these gestures and expressions (in Serbia and Slovenia). However in other countries these are the types of gestures that I have seen lead to extreme annoyance and even violence. Therefore the presence of Nazi gestures at a black metal concert is also an indicator of the both the success or lack of, policies that target and regulate extremist behavior and the overall level of taboo that these gestures stimulate amongst black metal fans in any given country.

Meanwhile, Back on the 'Thick' EU-descriptive Dracula Trail.

Many of the towns and villages on the first section of the road from Oradea to Sibiu were surrounded by acres of barren looking industrial desolation, broken windows and old communist era buildings wrapped in tangles of rusted metal and thorn bushes. Though in contrast to these sights, especially as we entered the Carpathians, many of the villages were quite pretty, populated with small colorful houses and the pleasant trappings of Transylvanian rural life. The streets and gardens contained many fruit trees and along

the roadsides were peasants selling fruit, vegetables, honey and faux-folk trinkets to the steady stream of trucks passing through.

Many of the villages had significant gypsy populations (if the stereotypical appearances are to be used as a basis for interpretation), the older men were typically rotund, dark skinned and wearing trilby hats, waistcoats and old suits. The women mostly hung around in front of houses chatting and staring at our slightly conspicuous car. The older ones were quite heavy set and some dressed fully in black, whereas the younger ones wore much more colorful clothes and were quite striking and pretty with dark eyes and long black hair tied up in scarves.

It took approximately ten hours to drive from Budapest to Sibiu, and it was dark by the time we arrived. We tried to ask a guy sweeping the street for directions, but we couldn't understand each other or the address that I showed to him. He also looked like he was insanely high on glue or some kind of industrial thinner or hallucinogen, as he had hugely dilated pupils and a manic vacant grin plastered across his face. When he showed our written directions to a passerby in a jerky awkward motion, she became quite anxious and wary of him and tried to move away as quickly as possible. A nearby taxi driver who was watching us with a look of playful derision then took pity on us and intervened, he looked at the address with a nod of approval and then lead us to our destination. We dropped off the car at our pensione and rode in a taxi for several miles outside the town until we arrived at the campsite where the festival was taking place.

At the entrance were three police officers chatting to some skinheads who were checking tickets, the police searched us in a very thorough manner frisking us and checking our pockets, boots and any other areas that may have hid weapons. It was only after some heated negotiation, that I was allowed to keep my chunky silver finger rings,

which they had wanted me to leave with them for safe keeping. I'm guessing that the search was only concerned with finding weapons or perhaps drugs, as they were allowing people to enter who were carrying alcohol as long as it was in plastic bottles. When they cleared us to enter we walked through a heavily wooded area for ten minutes until we reached an area that formed a huge terraced concrete and wood amphitheater. This faced onto a beautiful expansive lake which even in the dark reflected the surrounding mountains. This was one of the most spectacular concert settings we had ever seen, the terrace overlooked a large floating platform on the lake, and it was on this platform that the bands were performing. Overall the setting was extremely impressive, resembling a cross between an English 1980s football terrace and Roman amphitheater surrounding by trees. The backdrop to the stage was equally impressive, with tall dense forests, and the baroque over-the-top majesty of the Carpathian Mountains. Being more accustomed to overcrowded festivals under leaden gray skies in muddy fields in the midlands of Ireland, this location really took our breath away. The combination of epic natural beauty and a well positioned festival area excelled anything I have ever attended in Ireland.

Above: Scanned image of flier for Frey Faxi festival which lists band names.

We walked over to a small stall where two friendly but tough looking German skinheads were selling festival t-shirts. They told us that Temnozor were about to start playing. I bought a festival t-shirt and asked if there was any band t-shirts for sale, but apparently the guys selling merchandise for the band had packed up a few minutes previously and the only other things for sale were alcohol and water. I bought myself some beer and Simon bought some water and chatted to a seller who sounded Russian. At this stage I could make out the t-shirts and some banners being carried around in the crowd. It was very much an international gathering, with one group of skinheads carrying a banner that mentioned Sweden, another group were wearing Aryan nations t-shirts with

American flags on the back and there were other groups from all over Europe. English and German were the most commonly spoken languages that I could hear at that point. Most people were moving down towards the terraces as Temnozor began picking up their instruments and checking them. There had been a few bands playing earlier that night but our drive had taken longer than expected so we missed them, and I didn't have an opportunity to ask anyone what they sounded like.

Temnozor conducted a suspiciously short sound check and then began to play a song from their Horizons album. The crowd shuffled down the terraces in order to get closer to the band, and began to cheer loudly, shouting "slava" (a Slavic word with multiple meanings, but generally meaning 'glory' in this context) and raising the sign of the horns. There was also a large group of skinheads and metal heads who were quite drunk and raucous. They participated, nervously and unsure at first by giving furtive nazi salutes towards the band and shouting "seig heil", kind of testing the water in order to gauge the crowd's reaction. But after glancing around and finding no significant objections they became louder and more fanatic. Upon seeing these guys, a few other groups throughout the crowd also began saluting and chanting "seig heil" until it became the most vocal chant during that part of the concert, drowning out others who were chanting "slava Temnozor". In between the first two songs approximately thirty percent of the five hundred or so crowd was chanting "seig heil" in unison. Simon and I looked at each with a growing sense of nervous unease and he whispered, "fuck me this is all a bit surreal, it reminds me of football matches in the early eighties", "how the fuck did you talk me into coming along to this?" I jokingly responded "relax, we'll be fine as long as no one sees the CRASS tattoo or anarchy symbols on your arm".

Later when we were discussing the concert Simon suggested, "I bet they don't get the chance to do that very often" (referring to the seig heils and salutes), when it used to happen at gigs in England it was as much about starting a fight with the rest of the crowd than anything else". Simon went on to explain that "most of the time the bands had nothing to do with it, just look at any old footage of Sham 69 and Jimmy pleading with hundreds of skinheads to stop being boneheads, he often finished those gigs in tears, but he always thought it was better to try and include people rather than just ignore the problem". Simon also pointed out that "this was something a bit different, these bands are egging em on", "the only other time I've seen bands giving nazi salutes is when their taking the piss". In the seventies, both Siouxsie Sue of The Banshees, and Sid Vicious of the sex pistols had worn swastikas, but this was always associated with shock and provocation. Generally this was a kind of challenge in which they fed the media with it's own sense of moral outrage, as opposed to the way Nazi gestures and slogans were being used here in salute to the bands.

At Frey Faxi, the nazi gestures could be considered an occult use of a symbolic repertoire. One one level these gestures were impotent and directionless, as despite the diversity of the crowd, I doubt that there were many people participating who would be deeply offended by these gestures. However what was taking place at Frey Faxi, was based on a shared consensus between the band and sections (though not all) of the crowd. There was a relationship of reciprocity in which taboo gestures in the crowd were first acknowledged by the band and then responded to positively, encouraging an escalation in behavior.

Depending on the complexity of the song, there were at any given time six to eight musicians onstage performing in Temnozor. The vocalist was a large heavy bear of a

man, wearing leather trousers, no shirt and a wolf pelt over his shoulders; he had a shaved head and a short goatee beard. His gestures were expressive but not incredibly animated, and he didn't move around the stage very much during the performance. The whistle player was tall with a blond Hitler style haircut, wearing a t-shirt and combats tucked into 14 hole (the number of bootlace eyelets) steel toe capped army boots. This Hitler style haircut has become popular amongst older skinheads and was worn by a few of the people at Frey Faxi who seemed to be organizing the event,. A few of the people working at the bar and as security at Dunkelheit Festival (next chapter) also sported this hair style. The keyboard player of Temnozor was slightly hidden but playing quite well and driving the overall sound, despite the muffled audio quality. The drummer also played well, though it was apparent that they were having difficulties with their monitors as they kept gesturing to the sound desk for changes. The guitarists and bass player were dressed in a more typical black metal style with black jeans, boots and band t-shirts. They moved around the stage a lot but didn't communicate very openly with the crowd, and they are the main musical and song writing contingent within the band.

The first few songs sounded ok, with the Russian vocals, gaining a favorable reaction from the crowd and sounding similar to how the band sound on CD. As the night went on, the section of the crowd giving nazi salutes moved closer together into the center of the terrace in front of us. Gradually they formed a cohesive group, all drinking chanting and creating a, booze and testosterone soaked atmosphere that kept spilling over into a few of the unwilling groups of people beside them. There was a lot of gesticulating, hugging, raising beers, and shouting encouragement at each other. In any other venue this would probably be the section of the crowd that would initiate and dominate the mosh pit. But due to the terracing in this venue, there wasn't really the possibility of a mosh pit, and

the fact that the stage was on a floating platform at the edge of the lake also made it more or less impossible to mosh and stage dive.

After a few more songs the rain began to fall and lightening struck several times in the hills surrounding the lake, visually speaking this natural pyrotechnic show really enhanced the atmosphere and helped to cool down the humid night air. But the break in the weather also served as a cue for a large group of French speaking people on our left to make their exit. When the crowd had began 'seig heiling' earlier, this group of French speakers began to get increasingly agitated, especially some of the girls in the group and as they were leaving they kept glancing towards some of the skinheads with a look of disgust on their faces. The guys in the group all had long hair and none of them dressed in genre mixing style that some national socialist black metal fans adopt (long hair with skinhead type bomber jackets or shaved heads and clothes emblazoned with NS insignia). As they were leaving the girls in the group, all of which looked to be in their early twenties did not disguise their looks of disapproval towards the NS section of the crowd. Whereas the guys in the group of French speakers who seemed to be acknowledging agreement within their group, kept their disapproval to themselves, wisely not risking any kind of confrontation with the NS fans. Temnozor played a few more folksy/ballad type metal songs in Russian which sounded really strong and emotive. By now, large sections of the crowd were singing in unison with the band and perhaps due to the layout of the stage, and the fact that it was utterly un-conducive to moshing, this seemed to be the high point in Temnozor's performance.

The singer of Temnozor then addressed the crowd, shouting in a growled voice, "heil Romania, it's great to be here", then they launched into one of their most rousing folk/metal ballads, a song called Fatherland. This song started off powerfully but

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gradually descended into a musical farce as it became obvious that the crowd had a better knowledge of the lyrics than the singer who was trying to read them from a piece of paper. Through correspondence on the bands myspace.com profile I later found out that the main vocalist that night was a temporary replacement from the band Kroda, as Temnozor's normal vocalist was sick on the night. The singer's ignorance of the lyrics didn't seem to deter the bands NS skinhead fans, who, seemed basically to treat the whole occasion as an opportunity to shout "seig heil" and wave their arms in salute. At this point it was also possible to see a divide appearing in the crowd's reaction to the band. An increasing number of the more typical black metal fans (long hair and black clothes, non-skinhead dress styles) became obviously annoyed at the standard of musicianship and poor sound quality as they wandered off in small groups as the rain and bad weather increased.

This is something that I have occasionally witnessed at black metal gigs in Serbia, where quite often musicians from many local bands make up a large section of the crowd. This is usually the section standing in the area of the venue with the best sound quality, listening with what Berger aptly describes as "a powerful, motionless intensity" and standing with arms folded at the edges of the mosh pit (1999:70). It is this group that will generally be the harshest critics of a bands musicianship and technique. The other sections of the crowd with whom a metal band will be engaged in a relationship of deep reciprocity are the headbangers and mosher's who are typically located directly in front of the stage. The layout of a venue is often a critical factor in the failure or success of a metal concert. Harris Berger provides an excellent 'sociology of metal audience's attention' by analyzing the architecture and phenomenological effects between crowds and performers (1999:67-73). Therefore the success of Temnozor's performance at Frey Faxi was unusual

given the unorthodox layout of the venue and the inability to mosh and participate in the manner typical of the majority of metal concerts.

When Temnozor played their most famous song '*White Thunder Roars*' it became painfully obvious that the singer had lost all grasp of the lyrics and timing, mumbling through the main verses and repeating over and over again the line "white thunder roars" wherever he felt it appropriate. This increased the level of frustration in some sections of the crowd as a large number of people on the left side of the terrace made their exit. It was also obvious that the other band members were becoming irritated at the poor sound quality as they glanced angrily toward the singer and each other and looked distracted and less involved in playing as the song progressed. So although there is a tacit tolerance of many forms of intolerance within the wider black metal scene, amongst the scene members for whom musicianship is more important than ideology or spectacle, a band performing in an unprofessional manner is not something that could be easily condoned.

On a few occasions at gigs in Serbia that I had attended and enjoyed with Kozeljnik from The Stone/May Result, when we engaged in a post-gig analysis I tended to get caught up in the atmosphere and effect on the crowd that bands could evoke, and these criteria would form the basis for my appreciation of the gig. However for Kozeljnik, these aspects were of only secondary importance to the musicianship of a band, and he was often deeply critical of any mistakes or deviations that to me had been trivial and barely perceptible. Therefore Nazi gestures and ideology and the play element (referring to 'play' as understood by Huizinga) that goes along with these taboo displays, is for many of the more serious adherents of black metal, simply not enough to provide an attraction to and support for a band. Therefore when Temnozor's musicianship began to falter (though a degree of blame also lies with the sound rig) it was no surprise; that so

many of the more typical black metal fans decided to make their exit. Whereas given that bands such as Temnozor and Absurd tend to attract fans from both black metal and nazi skinhead music genres, the skinheads tended not to be as bothered about the standard of musicianship and were predominantly concerned with the public reciprocation and verification/performance of their ideologies. This dynamic is one that hasn't managed to cross genres in as successful a manner as other aspects of the black metal/skinhead crossover.

The sound structure of music that comes from the skinhead genre, is largely based on a punk and oi sound template derived from the older UK scene. Therefore it is usually always the force of the message, rather than the medium that is important in these styles of music where attitude overrules technical ability. Whereas in metal, control, displays of power and musical virtuosity are of paramount importance, most bands will spend many hours a week rehearsing and perfecting their technique. Certainly this was the case with The Stone and May Result in Serbia. As both Walser (1993) and Berger (1999) point out, despite appearances and misconceptions, metal is deeply concerned with the controlled use of power (chords), as opposed to punk which is premised on getting out of control

Rather surprisingly the bone-head element of the crowd (Simon's name for the nazi skinhead section of the crowd) either didn't notice or didn't care about the poor musicianship and sound quality. They became more and more vocal as the songs and beer consumption progressed. They were especially enthused whenever the singer shouted "Juden raus" in between one of the songs as they now had a new phrase to intersperse between their "seig heils".

While waiting for the next band to play I asked Simon what he thought of the festival and everything that was taking place. He said "this is exactly the same as some of

the shit that used to happen at some punk gigs during the early eighties, but more at football matches". "I remember when one team signed their first black player and lots of skinheads on the terraces started calling him a monkey whenever he played". "This is the same sort of shit, an excuse for a bunch of lads to shout seig heil while they're in a large group that won't get beaten up". Simon told me that it was a regular occurrence at Sham 69 (a popular 1970s oi punk band) and even early Madness concerts that groups of people would behave in a similar to what we had seen tonight. However this kind of behavior has become completely underground and marginalized in the current UK punk scene, and the UK Nazi skinhead scene is very much in decline.

The final band to play Frey Faxi Festival that night was a German band named Absurd. This band have/had near legendary status within the NSBM scene, as some of their founding members have served time in prison for murder and various political offenses in Germany. Their original vocalist had recently been released from prison, but as far as I am aware, he did not make an appearance at the festival. Nevertheless, they are a band who rarely perform (or when they do it is shrouded in secrecy) and amongst the crowd there was a good deal of anticipation leading up to tonight's performance.

Absurd begun as a little known black metal band mainly composed of three members Hendrick Mobus, Sebastian Schauscheill and Andreas Kirchner from the town of Sondershausen in former East Germany. When the three were seventeen years old they became fascinated by horror, death/black metal and Satanism and began meeting and conducting Satanic 'baptism' ceremonies in an old quarry (Moynihan & Soderlind 2003:273). In 1992 a fourteen year old youth named Sandro Beyer began hanging around with the group and attending their band rehearsals. However they soon began quarreling,

Beyer began a slanderous letter writing campaign, exposing an affair between

Schauscheill and an older married woman (Moynihan & Soderlind 2003:274). This

culminated in the murder of Bayer by the three members of Absurd, who were quickly

apprehended by the police. There followed a subsequent media frenzy in which the crime

was depicted as a 'Satanic sacrifice' (Moynihan & Soderlind 2003:273-278).

Absurd later released an audio cassette of their music with a photograph of

Beyer's tombstone depicted on the cover. In 1999 after serving a portion of their murder

sentences, Mobus and Schauscheill were released on parole and renewed their contacts

with the black metal scene, releasing a 4 track CD Asgardsrei, which features Rob Darken

of Polish national socialist black metal band Graveland on guest vocals (Moynihan &

Soderlind: 301). Soon afterward there was a series of police raids on the premises of some

German record labels and Absurd's CD's featured prominently amongst those confiscated.

Mobus parole was later revoked for 'political activities', "displaying banned political

emblems and giving a Hitler salute at a concert (Moynihan & Soderlind:301). He soon

disappeared, only to reemerge in the US where he spent several weeks hiding out with

William Pierce's racialist group The National Alliance. Following his subsequent arrest in

the US Mobus sought political asylum. William Pierce began soliciting donations to help

fight the case on the grounds of 'freedom of speech' "since the actions which resulted in

the original parole violation were not of a violent nature but rather, political misdeeds

which would be perfectly legal according to US laws" (Moynihan & Soderlind 2003:302).

At The time when these events were taking place, Pierce was using his label resistance

records in order to sign up black metal bands and bring a about a crossover between the

black metal and nazi skinhead scenes in the US. In this endeavor Pierce had some partial

successes, though in general the NSBM and skinhead scenes tend to merge due more to shared musical tastes then for grass-roots political activities.

That night at Frey Faxi Absurd really managed to live up to their name; they went through a long sound check that drew a large number of people back to the terraces in order to hear them. After a few false starts they began their first songs amid lots of cheering and a few drunken "seig heils". Overall their stage presence, dress and style was quite underwhelming, their original member, the guitarist, looked slightly comical, obese, with long scraggy hair at the sides and balding on top. Although I had been aware of the 'legacy' of Absurd, I had not seen any recent photos of the band and I couldn't help thinking that they looked so at odds with all of the hype that surrounds this band. The singer looked particularly cartoonish in his painfully tight leather trousers and some form of male corset (or medieval armor?) that was a size too big even for his vast bulk.

Here my recollections of the concert became a bit fuzzy as the effects of the days long drive and the few beers I had drank took hold. Though one particular memory that stands out was during a song which Simon and I instantly recognized as stealing the guitar riff from a song called '*Strychnine* by an obscure sixties psychedelic garage band called The Sonics. The rip-off was so blatant that after a few seconds of the song being played Simon and I glanced at each other and started laughing out loud, simultaneously saying "no way" in recognition of something that sounded so out of place. Simon asked "how many people in this crowd do you reckon know where they nicked the riff for this song"?

After a few more underwhelming songs and an increase in rainfall we decided to make our exit back to Sibiu, we walked back through the forest and hailed a taxi after a few minutes walking along the road. When we reached the center of Sibiu, the 'Capital of

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Culture' celebrations were still in full swing, well into the early hours of the morning. We walked past a beautifully preserved/restored medieval tavern which bizarrely, had traditional Irish music blaring out of the narrow little windows. In the central square the following evening there was a Celtic dance troupe performance. Occasionally over the next few days whilst we checked out the Capital of Culture festivities and profound sense of unreality sank in amongst the multi/ethno-cultural disneyland-esque celebrations.
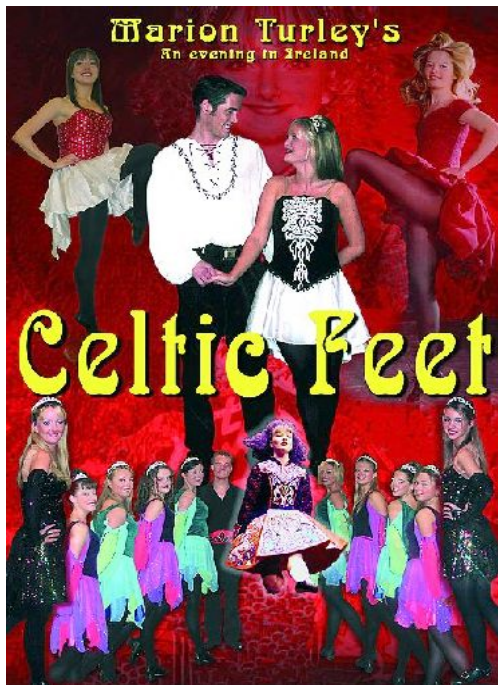

Image scan taken from Sibiu Capital of Culture website

http://www.sibiu2007.ro/index_en.php accessed on 11/12/2010.

The scenes of carnival, pomp and ceremony that were strewn all over the town center seemed a world away from the strange drunken attempt to recreate Nuremberg circa 1939 that we had just witnessed. Remembering the scenes of hundreds of people chanting "seig heil" and "Juden Raus" Simon asked, did that really just happen? Yeah I replied, and it's becoming more common in Russia and Ukraine. Urok from The Stone had told me previously of a conversation he had with someone from the Russian black

metal scene. They told him that in the urban areas where ten or 15 years ago whole sections of tenements were squatted by punks and hippies, now they were populated by ultra-nationalist skinheads.

It seems that these changes in musical-political orientation are increasing and spreading across Europe, although in many areas they are being actively challenged, particularly in Western Europe where these types of bands rarely if ever play. In Germany it is a criminal offense to display symbols or promote rhetoric that is in any way associated with National Socialism. These laws are rigidly enforced, to the extent that even black metal bands with absolutely no connection to NS politics have come under the gaze and censure of the state. As a research topic these hidden/occult music scenes present an interesting challenge, namely how something which bears all the symbols of an overtly political movement can, be understood as a social rather than a political phenomenon. The use of symbols in these instances are not in support of a specific party. They are aspects of a bricolage that seeks to profit on the symbols capacity to shock and confront, yet they are so hidden from mainstream audiences, that it is an almost directionless form of attack on some vaguely defined sense of imagined political correctness. This is where for many fans the appeal lies, the black metal scene thrives on being an 'extreme' form of musical and artistic expression. It draws upon some of the most horrific acts of recent history, wallowing in them and celebrating them to the extent that meaning has become completely re-contextualized.

Rather than viewing their actions as a moral outrage, aimed at the destruction of a particular ethnic or religious group. The types of rage and sentiment being invoked, is rendered impotent in terms of how fascism was originally used. Instead this energy is channeled into maintaining a scene, drinking, creating, partying, and forging links across

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Europe and the globe. Individually most of the people to whom I have spoken are well aware of the moral hazards and implications of Nazism, but within the confines of a music genre the use of Nazism is at odds with the lifestyle and moral outlook that many of the people actually practice. Whilst most people will utterly condemn every aspect of the legacy of national socialism, there are a number of people for whom the art, esoteric philosophies and spirit of volkish camaraderie can be separated from the atrocities and partially re-imagined in music scenes.

In part these scenes are a reaction against moral certainties, and the humanitarian ethos of older forms of rock music from which heavy metal originated. The moral entrepreneurs such as Bono, Sting and Bob Geldoff (although these figureheads are interchangeable) who want to 'heal the world' are viewed by many as hypocrites and champagne socialists who fail to practice what they preach. In black metal there is generally (NSBM being the exception) a distinction between theory and practice (music and social values). This is coupled with a strong desire to challenge most forms of political correctness that are seen as the prevailing consensus in mainstream music. These are possibly a form of reaction against the impersonal overproduction of generic sameness that has come about since the advent of MTV. Which to some people is the musical equivalent of Auge's non-anthropological spaces (1995). The perception of MTV as banal hegemony is perhaps not so far from the pessimistic interpretation of the 'culture industry' that Adorno describes:

> Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimously together. (2002:94)

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To members of the black metal scene MTV types of media serve as a symbol of all that is banal, mundane, politically correct, multicultural and therefore boring in the extreme. To many people in the black metal scene, the music genres that have come about since the advent of MTV are seen as a dilution of identity; based on a miscegenated mix of different genres and styles that have led to the production of a Frankenstein('s monster) musical monoculture. To many of its followers black metal provides a sense of order, certainty as opposed to musical flux, an identity rooted in a neo-romantic idea of Europe. This is particularly relevant in former socialist countries where the sense of tangible certainty and identity that existed under communism is no more. It is this search for a new certainty, at odds with but utterly enmeshed in modernity, that has found an extreme form of expression in the blood soil and mythology ethos of black metal.

In this disdain for contemporary modernity, it is possible that Adorno's critique would fall on sympathetic ears. If one substituted the term 'culture industry' for 'multiculturalism', or 'liberal democracy', or even 'ZOG' (Zionist Occupation Government), Adorno could quite easily be read as quasi-aristocratic fascism, with a pronounced disdain for popular and mass culture. Indeed Adorno rails against radio, advertising, the media, film, and depicts the 'culture industry' as the creator of unnecessary products which people fetishize to the extent that they become alienated from their use value. True, Adorno does make some accurate but depressing observations, of stark relevance to contemporary consumer society, particularly if one subscribes to the belief that we seek to identify with that which enslaves us.

> Today the culture industry has taken over the civilizing influence of the frontier and entrepreneurial democracy, whose receptivity to intellectual deviations was never to highly developed. All are free to dance and amuse themselves, just as, since the historical neutralization of religion, they have been free to join any of the countless sects. But freedom to choose an ideology, which always reflects

economic coercion, everywhere proves to be freedom to be the same... Intimate reactions of human beings have become so entirely reified, even to themselves, that the idea of anything peculiar to them survives only in extreme abstraction: personality means hardly more than dazzling white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. That is the triumph of advertising in the culture industry: the compulsive imitation by consumers of cultural commodities, which at the same time, they recognize as false. (Adorno 2002:135-136)

Countering this pessimistic vein, punk is generally considered the polar opposite of black metal and vice versa. Yet both share a similar zeitgeist of connectedness, with punk as a quasi-cosmopolitan alternative to mainstream collectivities and black metal as a scene which simultaneously utilizes ideas of nationhood whilst rejecting the contemporary definition of it. Do these scenes, whose selective and occult nature could be said to situate them beyond the vagaries of the 'culture industry', offer a form of resistance or alternative to mass homogeneity?

Perhaps, but at what price, or is an analysis along these lines simply a lapse into positivism and as Van de Port defines it, "the academic passion for tidying things up" (1998:23-27). It is all too easy to simply fall into the positivist trap of reading youth movements as forms of opposition and rebellion, but in the case of the black metal scene there is far too much of a tendency to mirror all manner of prejudices and hegemonic practices found in everyday Serbian contexts. What is clear however, is that these kinds of scenes are responses to anxieties produced in contemporary modernity. Epoch defining 'culture industries' do in fact exist, but not to the all encompassing extent that Adorno predicted. Politicians, priests, captains of industry and media moguls are far to self-interested and basically competitive to have the kinds of cohesion and singular will necessary to live up to Adorno's anxieties. Adorno failed to perceive or at least account for this, he does not sufficiently acknowledge agency. In his follow up work in "*The*

Culture Industry Reconsidered" (2001:98-106) Adorno finds some utility in Marxist analysis, however he fails short of offering Marxism as a credible alternative to the scenarios depicted in the "*Culture Industry*" (2002).

At the heart of Europe is a chimera that is viewed in a multiplicity of ways, all wishing to find some end destination, some ideal state of Platonic perfection in which utopian fantasies of an identity that is certain and fixed, can be realized. This is seen to be preferable to failed political systems and the numbing individualism of a predatory free-market and post socialist non-society that many black metal fans find themselves at odds with. This is the fuel feeding the aesthetic rage that leads young people to grasp for certainties amongst the Euro-flux of change, 'development' and rational modernization; in which people find that they are no longer members of a Nation but units in an economy. This is one of the myriad of reasons that Slavs, Germans, Scandinavians and even a few Americans came together and found common cause and an occult sense of certainty in the type of festival described in this chapter. These events are an opportunity to openly express and celebrate an outdated concept that has been revitalized in a new context. This is the tragic idea within the NSBM scene that being 'white' is somehow an achievement. This is a fantasy of 'whiteness' and a conceptual flexibility that has allowed members of nations formerly at war with one another to come together and attempt to recreate a zeitgeist of brotherhood, volk and togetherness.

Ironically this is perhaps a similar zeitgeist that in the past, nationalism and war was so adept at creating. Because amongst the difficulty and uncertainty of contemporary modernity (non-anthropological spaces type modernity as described by Auge 1995), and conditions of perceived under-achievement and lack of opportunity. NS scene members

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are taking pride in and fostering a sense of self-respect based on a fantasy; that (a) the white race that has achieved something to be proud of. So when there is little else to celebrate in life, the occult fantasy of whiteness is something that is clung to and venerated, leading to these reflexively un-reflexive celebrations of hatred and religious intolerance that are only ever intended for the initiates of a hidden and marginal cult.

CHAPTER 6.

The Gift and Collective Effervescence: Blood-letting and Blood Drinking at a Black Metal Festival.

An Anthromusicology?

The festival discussed in this chapter (Dunkelheit) took place soon after Frey Faxi and had such a completely different tone and atmosphere that I have accordingly adopted a very different style of analysis and description. Following Frey Faxi and the departure of my friend Simon back to Ireland, a sense of disappointment and anti-climax marked the days leading up to Dunkelheit. On the journey to Frey Faxi I had expected danger and the possibility of violent tension at the concert spilling out into the crowd and breaking out sporadically around the venue. I also recalled the violence of the Dublin punk scene during the nineteen nineties and the ways in which 'political' disagreements provided the impetus for fights at gigs. Frey Faxi shocked me slightly but not in the manner I was expecting. The uber-secret dangerous world of NSBM turned out to be surprisingly mundane and even the bands themselves, were by their own admission not in their best form that night, at least in the case of Temnozor whose vocalist was ill. Absurd simply failed to provide the energy and spectacle that I had become accustomed to after so many successful black metal gigs in Serbia, where I have yet to witness a disappointing performance. In the previous chapter the analysis focussed on a few interwoven threads, travel writing, horror, the other, and a disdain towards mass culture on a number of levels. Therefore the anthropological gaze shall shift in this chapter to an entirely different

framing in an attempt to describe something of the visceral nature and symbiotic connection that exists between black metal performers and the audience.

The theories drawn upon derive from the phenomenological approach to the study of music scenes, espoused by Harris Berger, in '*Metal, Rock and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience*' (1999) which 'thickly' describes situationality and experience. The phenomenological approach will also be contrasted with a slightly more abstract philosophical framing based on Sontag's critical essay '*Against Interpretation*' (1990) and the call within that essay for a more engaged and unmediated approach to works of art and performance. The first stumbling block in the way of this line of analysis which calls for 'less interpretation' is the fact that analysis is arguably interpretation under a different name. The last chapter concluded with a call to avoid tidying things up, and to avoid seeking to identify a zeitgeist of resistance within youth cultures that simply are not oriented that way. The shift in emphasis in this chapter is undertaken in order to avoid a psycho-analysing of music scenes, and a desire to avoid the obviousness of the trope of nihilism and self-harm. Whilst the last chapter had a secular, profane, messy, personal-is-political slant. This chapter strives for an engagement with the sacred that comes about when the (Satanic) 'jump to your feet' and scream hallelujah (or heil Satan) moment of transcendence occurs between performer and audience.

Sontag's (1990) criticism of interaction with, and interpretation of works of art which feature a banal and 'crutch like' use of Freudian analysis is extremely useful due to the way in which she highlights the need to experience and describe the viscerality of art as interactive spectacle (which in turn may also be applied to a music event). Sontags' piece could be viewed as a call for people to experience art on a more profound and engaged level. So, although this call is understated in her piece, it is nonetheless quite

ambitious and idealistic. It provides a basis for highlighting; the difficult to articulate, 'sacred' aspects of art within music, as a form of entertainment and community binding spectacle in a manner similar to the concept of a 'total social phenomenon' as understood by Mauss (1967:1). In this chapter the basic tenets of Sontags' piece will be stretched to breaking point and re-contextualised here as a kind of manifesto that I believe was lived up to at Dunkelheit festival in Brno.

This is also being undertaken in order to see if it is possible to privilege an approach that is genuinely, somewhere between an ethno and an anthro-musicology. Ethno in the sense that the music being described is self-consciously more folk, than most folk music in terms of it's conceptual locatedness, anti-cosmopolitan subject matter and blood, soil and mythology imaginary. This is partially informed by the premise that so called 'ethno-music' (a genre of music much more common in central and east European music outlets) has lost a good deal of its meaning as a descriptive label, in a manner similar to 'indy' music. So-called 'indy' music was originally labelled as such due to musicians taking a DIY approach to the recording and distribution of their music. This was a movement with a similar ethos to the tape trading networks described in previous chapters. However with the success of formerly 'indy' Seattle bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and their Manchester (Madchester) scene equivalents who eventually signed to major record labels, the term 'indy' came to define a genrefied sound structure or sentiment, as opposed to a production and distribution ethos.

Therefore in light of the fact that so called 'ethno' music now features a high degree of genre mixing and is more often performed in cosmopolitan environments as opposed to indigenous contexts. It is useful to interrogate the label 'ethno' and see what

can be rehabilitated from it, in terms of a theory of meaningful labels. So in this vein the following criteria are suggested:

1.   That in order for the label 'ethno' to apply, the music must self consciously speak from and about a particular (though more than likely; imagined) sense of ethnos, volk or place (even if that place is an imagined one).

2.   It is conceptually useful to think of ethno music as having an anti-cosmopolitan bias. This is based on the idea, that although the music may be physically performed, composed and conceptually located in the flux of a metropolis, it is essentially tribalistic in comparison to older definitions of cosmopolitanism.

3.   In this aspect the term cosmopolitanism must also be defined by thinking about it's origins in ancient Greece, and the philosopher Diogenes' idea that in order to be considered as such, the cosmopolitan must ask, to what (allegiance/duty) do I owe to family, community, polis, tribe, and nation etc.?

Diogenes answer (to his own question) is; the true cosmopolitan owes no allegiance to any family/polis (etc.) whatsoever, because to profess allegiance, would be to place oneself in conflict with someone else's family/polis, nation, tribe (etc)'. Rather Diogenes would say that a true cosmopolitan owes his allegiance/duty to humanity as a whole.

Therefore in order for the epithet 'ethno' to be relevant to the musicology of a particular scene, a scenic sense of 'imagined community' as understood by Benedict Anderson is relevant in this context (2006). Most musicians compose and perform in order to please an imagined community of hearers, however not all forms/genres of music are created in response to an 'imagined community' in an ethnic sense of hearers with a strong sense of shared identity. A few examples of music that does seem to function in this way come from the so called 'underground' scenes within hip hop, punk, goth and

metal, whereby place, ethos and identity are bound by scene specific codes. Most importantly a sense of honour and shame attached to the scene; which is not dissimilar to the manner in which Anderson describes the nation as having a sense of honour and shame (Anderson 2006). Furthermore the theories of Bennett on musical 'neo-tribes' mentioned in the introductory chapters of this thesis (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004:1-18) also lend weight to this argument. This is the suggestion; that the quasi-formal aspects, internal system of rules and covert logic's under which some music scenes operate, serve as microcosms of the nation state. Yet there is a crucial difference to state nationalism in that these music scene microcosms operate on a 'play' principle as understood by Huizinga, as opposed to a war principle as understood by Hobbes and later Foucault in '*Society Must Be Defended*' (2004).

Whilst current trends in anthropology stress the importance of moving beyond 'ethnos' (the annual AAI conference theme for 2010 was, *'Ethnography Beyond Ethnos'*), due to the conceptually messy and determinative nature of ethnic identification. Within music scenes an allowance can be made for these aspects because of the flexibility and ascribed, as opposed proscribed nature of membership. For example it is an 'ethnos' in the imaginative sense of the term as people predominantly pick and choose aspects of a scene identity, often as a form of alterity, with regards to prevailing norms and 'mainstream' styles. This is not to pretend that coercion, especially in the form of peer pressure does not take place; however, there is a self-constructed nature to a musical ethnos and identity. This means that music scene identities are a social performance that is much easier to mute and disguise or put aside, when compared to the embodied and ascribed sense of ethnos that comes from being born into a particular region, with an accent, a religion, a nationality and a prevailing world view. As outlined in chapter three, the performance of

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scene identities based on ideas of blood, soil, mythology and volk is a performance that relies upon the concept of 'play' and therefore can be taken up or put down at will (Huizinga 1955:9).

> Play is distinct from "ordinary" life both as to locality and duration. This is the third main characteristic of play: its secluded-ness, its limitedness. It is "played out" within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning. Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is "over". It plays itself to an end. (Huizinga 1955:9)

This chapter also advocates an anthro-musicology of the black metal music scene, by virtue of the fact that it is the codes, practices, rituals and participatory framework that are being analysed here, as opposed to a(n) (imagined) traditional ethnomusicological approach that privileges song text and sound structure as a praxis of analysis. Basically what is striven for here is an emphasis on the performative, embodied, physical, and face to face aspects of a music scene, as opposed to an interpretation of the textual aspects. One of the reasons for this approach is to foreground the importance of participant observation through ethnography in anthropology, and to demonstrate the extents to which enthusiastic participant observation can provide the kinds of richly descriptive insights that text/net (armchair anthropology) based research are simply incapable of revealing.

This chapter will also incorporate a brief reference to the spirit (more so than an in-depth study of the theory) of classic anthropological texts and themes by Mauss and Durkheim, in the final section of this chapter. This final section will include a 'thick' descriptive account of Dunkelheit festival that took place in Brno during late august 2007, at which the music and spectacle of symbolic ritualised violence and bloodshed created the conditions of possibility that engendered the experience of a form of collective effervescence and mass-ecstasis.

When I first began to analyze the spectacle of the live event, I found it difficult to find a theoretical approach that would be useful for describing, contextualizing and analyzing the values apparent in what I had witnessed. The first few chapters of this thesis represent that search for suitable frames of reference, the at times agonizing trawl through British subcultural studies who come closer to documenting similar phenomenon than most anthropological sources. In searching for a set of meanings attached to the 'values' apparent in what I had witnessed at Dunkelheit and throughout the fieldwork, I intend to use this chapter as an opportunity to describe that which was shared, as opposed to that which was simply observed. Most literature on the phenomenon of bloodletting within music scenes, tend to relate to a therapeutic psychological discourse, whereby scarification and cutting, etc. are referred to as 'self-harm'. The focus on these activities tends also to concentrate on 'self harm' which has occurred in a private setting, and has therefore tended to be analyzed from a viewpoint whereby bloodletting is strictly conceived of as a disorder to be treated and prevented.

Whereas the literature which deals with music scene values, as described in the 'Heart of Europe' chapter, often tend to base their interpretation and description of what is taking place, in terms of a socio-political meaning. Quite often this kind of analysis is text based using song lyrics and published sources, as opposed to face to face participant observation, and an understanding of meaning in performative contexts. There is a tendency also to view manifestations of physical, symbolic and politically motivated violence in youth scenes, as somehow a failure of (within) youth culture (Kahn-Harris 2004:95-110) to bring about wider social change. The success of youth movements instigating widespread social change could be said to have peaked in terms of scope and

ambition as occurred following the youth movements of the nineteen sixties and early seventies. Therefore cultural commentators in the seventies and for a considerable period after have tended to read the codes inherent in many subcultures as forms of resistance, occasionally at the expense of privileging this trope over the themes of alienation that Adorno and Horkheimer had raised previously (2001, 2002).

Whilst the events described in this chapter touch upon gender, politics, and the issues of mental health and blood hygiene, it is not my intention to overly dwell on these matters. Admittedly to some readers, these issues may be the elephant in the room that I am refusing to address, however there is too much obviousness and predictability in following a line of analysis that renders the most exciting aspects of youth music, banal. By this is meant, banal in terms of trying to glean the types of meaning and deeper understanding of performance and live art that the participant observation approach in this chapter seeks to elicit. Whilst there is no doubt that what I had witnessed is not divorced from the above criteria, such as self harm and dangerous politics. In as much as is ever possible after the fact, it is my intention here to foreground, the physical, tangible and immediacy of the event, as opposed to explaining away; through interpretive obfuscation, or academic "tidying up" (Van De Port 1998:23). Therefore this chapter attempts to both foreground and straddle insider/black metal fan and ethnographer viewpoints, and in doing so, not load my analysis with a judgment on the psychological well-being of the individuals involved.

Although the themes of representation and participation loom heavily in this thesis, it was/is with difficulty that an analytical framework could be found that was simultaneously objective, yet balanced enough to allow for the expression of my own enthusiasm and fan-dom of black metal. In trying to merge various subject positions an

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attempt was made in the writing, to not delve too heavily into a form of moral relativism whereby everything is permissible (though at times this is unavoidable). Therefore the ideas and approach to art, as advocated in Sontag's '*Against Interpretation'* (1990) essay, provided me with something of a theoretical 'eureka' moment. In many cases, the discussion of performance and works of art as text, objects and symbols etc. has proved something of a navel gazing hindrance when applied to music scenes. Overly analytical descriptions generally run the risk of being too far removed from the sensual viscerality of an event, whilst journalistic fan-dom is more often than not, too biographical, and subject to conventions that would hinder the deeper understandings that good anthropology and participant observation have the power to evoke. It is too often the case that overly genrefied descriptions sanitize and make safe through over-scrutinizing the intensity of a successful live event and loose sight of its enthusiasm, spontaneity and spectacle. This is particularly so in the case of violent, visually and conceptually provocative events, during which there is for many a profound and engaging experience of emotions and 'out of body-ness' that is commonly referred to as the 'sacred', when discussed in relation to religious experiences. This framing which equates notions of the sacred, with an occurrence that would otherwise be understood as profane, seems quite appropriate to a successful black metal festival. Many elements of this festival incorporate quasi-religious experiences, due to the manner in which the music and performance evoke many aspects of ritual, sacrifice, catharsis, bloodshed and collective effervescence. To many of the people involved in black metal, performance is also self-consciously regarded as something elevated from secular and mundane (as understood by Kahn-Harris 2007) experiences through special preparatory rituals, which shall be in the following section.

Preparation Rituals.

The experience of the sacred is highly important for small music scenes with infrequent events such as black metal, as the live event is a combination of art and ritual which differs enormously from so called 'mainstream' music events. Although the shows are reproducible (not one off events), the interaction is on a superficial level, partially democratized (in terms of attributing power to a norm-defining minority), due to the small, intimate, and often face-to-face nature of the scene and level of internet correspondence between bands and fans. It is democratic (though not in right versus left political sense) or quasi-egalitarian in the sense that a co-dependent form of exchange takes place between band and performer. It is through a descriptive examination of the principle behind this exchange that an understanding of this co-dependence can be ascertained. In effect this principle behind the exchange, is in a number of ways akin to the "force in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return", as outlined in Mauss essay on '*The Gift and Forms of Exchange*' (1967:2).

Viewed in a loosely economic or participatory framework (paying your money and turning up as a fan at a concert), black metal (as with many music scenes, except punk) comes across as quite hierarchical with a strong distinction observed between musicians and fans. This level of distinction and interaction varies depending on the band, though not necessarily in terms of the success and status (popularity) of the band. For example when playing Exit Festival in Serbia during 2006, the singer from the band Moonspell sat out on the grass with fans chatting, whilst applying his corpsepaint and drinking beer. Whereas at the following years festival, the vocalist of the band Satyricon (Moonspell and Satyricon are both bands of similar popularity and status) stayed separate from the stage crew and demanded sushi and a specific brand of spring water (to date there is only one

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Asian restaurant in Novi Cad and unfortunately, still no sushi vendors)!

In some cases this separation between performer and fan can expose musicians to ridicule. But when observed in a manner that does not contradict a black metal genre ethos, this distinction is welcomed, as it increases the sense of occultism (meaning that which is hidden from the uninitiated, and as described in the chapter 'At the Heart of Europe') of the scene and events. Many fans prefer the mystery that takes place behind the scenes to be preserved, rather than have illusions shattered. For example when I was eighteen I was a fan of a band from London named Nosferatu, whose music was an evocative blend of clever harpsichord arrangements layered into a modern gothic rock sound, with vampiric sensuality and an otherworldly style. All those elements of their music fused in such a way that allowed the mind to create ones own imaginary and escapist music world or sound scape. On their accompanying artwork there was never any images of the band so naturally I built up an image in my head that the band themselves could possibly never live up to in the flesh. When eventually I went to see them perform at a gig in London I honestly thought that someone was playing a joke when the band came onstage. This band of mythical vampires that I had imagined from months of listening to the music, were in reality fronted by a chubby, dwarfish, Dave Vanian (very charismatic vocalist from the band The Damned) clone, with badly applied white make up that was running down his face by the end of the first song. The whole dream world that their music and lack of band pictures had produced, had become so intense in my imagination, and the disappointment so bitter when I saw the band in the flesh, that after that concert the illusion was shattered and I never listened to them again!

With most 'ordinary' bands in so-called 'mainstream' music scenes, the backstage/behind the scenes activities generally come across as quite occult to the

uninitiated and it is more often than not, an elite sphere that exists beyond most peoples reach. Within the black metal scene this occultism is escalated into a more profound sphere of activity by rituals such as the application of 'corpsepaint', special costumes, self-harm, blood drinking, and imbibing intoxicating substances (or negating them). Even the most jovial of black metal musicians that I have spent time with back stage, do not joke around or indulge in any form of self-parody when applying corpse paint. For some (if I may indulge in some mock-heroic description), these ablutions are akin to a fighter, warrior or athlete preparing for competition and engaging in the rituals necessary to create a successful outcome. This is a form of stage/secular ritual that always assumes and demands a sombre approach; this is the sometimes spiritual; but always psychological preparation that goes beyond mere mechanical formality and is essential in order to perform a successful gig.

After the show, and after the release and exchange has taken place between band and audience, the corpse paint is usually quickly removed (with amusing and varying degrees of success), victory celebrations and a return to an elevated form of post-adrenalin normality is achieved. This 'normality' of course, depends of the level of success and the extent to which exchange and catharsis has taken place. Though here too there is often a further set of ritualistic exchanges between stage crew, friends/girlfriends, and fellow musicians in which further verification of the success or failure of an event is sought. This post gig verification depends heavily on how the band themselves believe the performance went; and this is also the main period during which questions are asked about any mistakes in the music or performance, so they can be noted and sometimes scrutinized.

Into the Mythic State.

Through these rituals and during successful performances the musicians and fans transcend and are lifted out of the mundane (in terms of the ordinary, but also as described by Kahn-Harris 2007), into the realm of the sacred, where the experience of communitas and collective effervescence are rendered entirely present through the meeting of, and exceeding of expectation, and the creation of new 'scene myths'. Given that black metal both thrives and trades upon its proximity to real and symbolic forms of violence, these 'myths' and a continual reinforcing and recreation of scene 'myths' within the genre are in a sense the 'force' or 'thing' that compels the exchange and reciprocity that takes place (Mauss 1967:2).

In her discussion of film criticism, Sontag states that "those who reach for a Freudian interpretation", "are only expressing their lack of response to what is there on the screen" (Sontag 1990:10). Upon first reading this sentence I was struck by the polite forcefulness of it, the sentence; "lack of response to what is there on the screen" struck me as a challenge, an insult, questioning the viewer's very essence and potency. It seemed to command, even demand a response that is shorn of mediation. It seemed to state that the 'viewer' who reaches for a Freudian interpretation is somehow less human, less authentic, in terms of an ability to respond in a sensual and emotional way. This practice of 'approaching art in order to interpret' it is for Sontag a fallacy which decrees 'that there really is such a thing as the content of a work of art'. By content is meant layers of meaning that exist only in dialogue and separate from the immediacy of the work of art. Here art has lost its magickal capacity and has become simply a textual, mathematical equation (1990:5). What is often no longer possible in most forms of art criticism, is entirely possible (with a little enthusiasm) within the black metal scene. This is why the

element of fantasy, mentioned in chapters three and four is so important. The live spectacle is the crystallization of the fantasy, a temporary therefore transcendental return to a 'mythic' as opposed to 'post-mythic' consciousness in which the power and credibility of myths is still ascribed to and appreciated for its capacity to inspire and bond people together (Sontag 1990:5-6). This is the domain of 'play' within culture (Huizinga 1955 and chapter two). In the case of black metal as 'neo-tribe' (as understood by Bennett 2004), or as an imagined musical community, the witnessing of powerful live performances has the capacity to excite, confront and in fact re-create and bind people together, in a contemporary version of 'mythic' era, mimetic art. Therefore art is once more elevated to the status of magick, if we take 'magick (magick with a 'k' distinguishes between the tricks of a conjurer and magick as understood in an occult context)' to mean the process of bringing about change in others, as explained Aleister Crowley (1989).

This altered consciousness and understanding of art as magick also has echoes of Antonin Artaud and the Theater of Pain movement, which advocated the thesis; that in the (at the time) new age of cinema, theater MUST become transcendental and move away from mere representation (Artaud 2004:58-67). Artaud was an actor/artist who physically and emotionally performed the extremes of what it was possible to make people watch. Such was the extent to which he expressed sentiments and embodied the emotional states and stress of his characters, that his very sanity was/is in question. Rather than simply elucidate the lines written for a stage character, Artaud often chose to writhe around in agony on stage in order to push the boundaries of what it meant to 'represent' a character. This was an extreme predecessor of method acting in which the character depicted was no longer simply a human automaton reciting a script, but a living embodiment of an intellectual emotional extremity. Artuad and his followers demanded that theater must

avoid the banal obviousness that it had been allowed to indulge in, in the past. In Artaud's

view, this was to risk becoming entirely redundant due to the invention of cinema and its

capacity for mimetic representation ie. an accurate visual presentation of what was

actually there in front of the camera. This also has echoes of Walter Benjamin's thesis,

'*Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*' (2007: 220-224), whereby the public's

engagement with art is no longer sacred and trans-formative, due to the mechanical

reproduction of images, film and music.

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its
> presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to
> be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was
> subject throughout the time of its existence. (Benjamin 2007:220)

This also encompasses the idea that the imagination does not have to be a solitary

medium, as it is now possible to view the imagination and experience of others through

film, print and photographs. The imagination of others and the (a) reality of others may be

witnessed en masse and in private, and on repeated occasion. But with this loss of

authentic context for reproducible works of art comes a diminution of the 'aura' of a work

of art (Benjamin 2007:223).

As an example of the cheapening (diminution of potency) of mass production,

Benjamin cites the example of a sculpture of the goddess Venus. The Venus sculpture was

originally produced as an object of ritual and veneration, this was the authentic historical

context. However, over time the statue has undergone a decontextualization and become

observed as an object of secularized art by Greek and Roman commentators, this trend

continued through to the renaissance (Benjamin 2007:223-224). Benjamin describes this

journey through time in which the Venus sculpture changed from being a religious, potent

interactive idol, into an object of the gaze, secular and less demanding than its previous

incarnation. This ties in with Sontag's advocacy of art as a return to the sacred, to the mythic experience of art. In truth an act almost of faith, or at least imagination is required when faced with colored canvases in a sterile white gallery. But if this criteria is applied to the ritualized Dionysian frenzy of the black metal concert, perhaps the leap of faith or act of imagination need not be so strenuous in order to engage in a transcendental experience. Particularly in the knowledge of all that the scene is comprised of, the myths, the technical virtuosity, and the fact that art in various forms is so amenable to the concept of 'play'.

> Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work. (Benjamin 2007:224)

Huizinga bemoaned the loss of, and lack of opportunities for 'play' in modern culture. But the scenes/publics/neo-tribes that coalesce around the mythology, art, violence, ritual and in some cases blood-letting of the black metal scene are without doubt a refuge or vestigial repository for the 'play' instinct.

> More and more the sad conclusion forces itself upon us that the play-element in culture has been on the wane ever since the 18th century, when it was in full flower. Civilization today is no longer played, and even where it still seems to play it is false play. (Huizinga 1955:206)

Or, as W.B. Yeats tells us, "everything has changed utterly", and we can no longer go back to a pre mass-production of art, state of consciousness. Representations and the internet, TV etc. have reduced the potential for stylistically intense and monogamous, unmediated relationships to works of art. Too much has changed to experience a magickal interaction.

Or has it?

The neo-romanticism inherent in black metal and a few other music genres (Neo-folk, rave) seeks to undue, or at least re-imagine as undone these changes. In Sontag's critique there is a strong element of this, 'interpretation' an act that was once permissible/essential and helped us to understand something, is now banal. Interpretations themselves have become subject to mass production and are in fact a barrier between the work of art and the audience. Sontag urges us to move beyond the obvious and find new and more direct forms of interaction and understanding, to recapture the magick and sense of wonderment that occurred when "art was an instrument of ritual" (1990:3). In order to imagine this mythic power in art, one could think of the beautiful mosaics in Greco-Roman temples, here were depictions loaded with meaning for the initiated. Or the ability of the early medieval church to control minds and teach their subjects using the images carved onto Irish high crosses. These were stories literally set in stone that had traveled through time fully intact and (theoretically) impermeable to the vagaries of dissection through criticism and interpretation. The knowledge was in a manner of speaking both mythic and circular, it spoke of itself, circulating myths for the veneration of mythology in a defined community that wielded power based upon these myths.

But is it Art?

In an age in which art and discourse have become largely inseparable, the challenge of mimetic theory is welcome in an understanding of music performance as art. This is because live music more so than many other medium, most easily manages to, (as the Greek philosophers called upon art to) justify itself. Or, as a poignant piece of graffiti I once read on a toilet wall declared; "FUNCTIONLESS ART IS USELESS" (Anon. Whelan's Pub, Dublin). Art as "Aristotle counters, is medicinally useful in that arouses

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and purges dangerous emotions" (Sontag 1990:4), and it is within the sphere of these 'dangerous emotions' that black metal is so utterly immersed. Black metal purposely and creatively drowns itself in these negative emotions and gray areas of contemplation. The concert described in this chapter, contained much of what could be thought of as dangerous, negative, destructive emotion. This was taking place not necessarily for the sake of catharsis and shedding of dangerous emotions, as is often the effect of hardcore and punk gigs described by Tsitsos (2006). The black metal concerts in which bloodshed occurs are also circular in a manner similar to the circularity of the early myths. Spectacular dangerous, bloody concerts confirm black metal's origins and pay homage to the blood, fire, murder and suicides that brought the genre to prominence. These kinds of gigs during which boundaries had been broken in terms of what a performer could do to their body and survive, brought about changes amongst the circle of people from the Serbian black metal scene who attended. For a while at least; the parties were different, the hedonism more extreme, blood was spilled. Boundaries of acceptable behavior were tested, and in our recreation time we sought out videos of performers who were even more extreme than what we had witnessed at Dunkelheit in Brno.

Live performance is also one of the most visibly exposed and vulnerable forms of art. When the justification of live performance as spectacular art is not achieved (Sontag 1990:3), a crowd will respond, threatening both body and ego with violence. If we view the exchange aspect of festivals and performance in the context of *The Gift* and potlatch ceremonies, there is an important similarity here, in terms of what is at stake.

> It is said of the great mythical chiefs who gave no feast that he had a
>
> rotten face, for to loose ones face is to loose ones spirit, which is truly the
>
> 'face', the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit and wear an

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emblem or totem. It is the veritable persona which is at stake and can be

lost in the potlatch. (Mauss 1967:38)

This also ties in with the sense of art justifying itself; which is particularly relevant

within so with so called 'underground', occult music scenes. By 'underground' is meant

music that has is produced in small 'glocal' scenes which tend to exist, outside of

'mainstream' music industry, modes of production and distribution (as outlined in chapter

three). This occult status is made possible because as mentioned previously, underground

scenes albeit often temporarily, manage to avoid the homogenization that similar forms of

music encounter through censorship and the gaze of the state and other institutions that

eventually mediate experience. As a scene largely outside the scope of these institutions

(the Norwegian scene being the exception), (Serbian and Slavic) black metal, for the

initiated, is at ease with, and revels in its sense of occultism. This is a scene in which

magick and art casually and of necessity overlap, in order to continue to thrive and trade

upon its sense of 'otherness'. To further explain the concept of black metal as art

justifying itself, it is possible to allude to the 'is it art (?)' question that coalesces around

works that test conceptual boundaries (for example Tracy Emmin's installations, or

Marcel Duchamp's toilet). Such is the state of conceptual art, and the necessity of

discourse and interpretation surrounding so many pieces, that it is possible to apply the

analogy of the folk tale 'The Emperor's New Clothes' to the question of whether or not an

object or arrangement could be considered art. Perhaps all it would take to reveal the

emperors nudity in the art world would be an elaborate hoax? A hoax whereby the

producer of an artwork allows the discourse surrounding a piece to flourish, only to later

announce, that actually, this is a hoax, a joke, it is not a piece of art, but in fact an

experiment to test the limits of gullibility and critics willingness to create sesquipedalian

word salad.

In black metal the question of whether or not a band is 'art', potent, relevant, or in scene argot: 'tr00' (true) black metal, involves an equally complicated set of considerations. A consensus has to be achieved which balances popularity, potency and the extent to which a black metal band confirms and creates scene myths. For example popularity and over-exposure can destroy a bands underground status, though this does not necessarily have to be the case. The two bands mentioned earlier, Moonspell and Satyricon, although both enjoying similar degrees of mainstream success, managed to both confirm (Moonspell) and loose (Satyricon) their underground or 'tr00' status in Serbia after playing at Exit Festival. With Moonspell, they won over a crowd of die-hard 'old school' black metal fans by playing lots of old songs and drinking with their fans. Whereas with Satyricon they focused on playing newer, commercially successful songs, and the vocalist committed the ultimate faux pas when he declared to a Serbian crowd that Satyricon "love this bit of Latino culture". Basically they behaved like spoiled MTV stars, at least in the opinion of an influential peer group within the Serbian scene.

Satyricon's reception at Exit Festival also had a gendered dimension to it, as many of the females in the crowd could be seen enjoying the gig and cheering the band on, at the same time as many of their male partners in the crowd were screaming "fuck you, you fucking assholes", "we're Slavic, not fucking Latino". The vocalists "Latino culture" faux pas was the black metal equivalent of Bono (from the band U2), in an episode of The Simpsons, shouting "hello Shelbyville", when they were actually performing in Springfield!

Sontag argues that works of art should be experienced for what they actually are, art should frighten, confront, and demand sensual, physical, and tangible reactions from

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people, she states that "real art has the capacity to make us nervous" (Sontag 1990:8). Within the black metal scene it is this nervousness that energizes the scene, the combined fear and secretive thrill of Satanic or fascistic symbols, texts and music being discovered and misunderstood by scene outsiders. Or the unknown dangers and provocative taboos of NSBM, the physical bloodletting extremes by vocalists such as Kvaforth (of the band Shining) and Maniac (formerly of the band Mayhem), and the strangeness felt by many people who self-consciously 'other' themselves when they dress and immerse themselves in the lifestyle and practices of black metal.

The barriers to a 'real' experience of art that Sontag warns us of, these types or tropes of interpretation that seek to sanitize, by "taming art" and make it "manageable, and comfortable", are also the same threats to the black metal scene (1990:9), that happen when the mundane intrudes upon the spectacular. An example of this took place in Norway, during 2008 when the black metal band 'Keep of Kaleisin' entered the competition to represent their country in the Eurovision song contest. For many black metal fans this effectively diminished the potency of a band that derived part of their power and prestige from the 'darkness' or unknowable quality that is ascribed to a band when they are part of an underground music scene. Seeking media exposure in one of the campest song competitions in Europe, was seen by some as a form of weakness and selling out; an example of a band from the darkest underground emerging into the 'brightness' and publicity of the 'mainstream'.

Sontag advocates accepting the visual, physical and intellectual, for the immediacy and "rigorous if narrow solutions to certain problems" (Sontag 1990:9). These 'problems' with respect to art and performance in black metal are; the difficulty of maintaining a set of values and aesthetics that are both dangerous to try and live up to, and contradictory in

terms of everyday practice and the mundane. In order to achieve a consensus and engage in and experience the state of 'mythic' consciousness, a quasi-suspension of disbelief is invoked that allows black mettalers to accept the inconsistencies in the scene and thereby validate and enhance the scenes' power. This means that black metal fans must revel in the un-ironic aspects of the scene and lend it credibility by propagating the 'myths', by only questioning these 'myths' carefully. Even then this questioning should only take place in order to enhance and innovate within the genre, or in order to push boundaries to the extent that new sub-genres are created within black metal. For example Shining, the band discussed later in this chapter, have occasionally labeled their music as 'suicidal' or 'depressive' black metal, in terms of its subject matter. Though in terms of their sound structure, they have more recently styled themselves as 'black jazz', due to the complex poly-rhythms and dense jazz sound-scapes that they create.

Sontag's dictates' for art criticism and appreciation provide an extremely rich and useful approach to the anthropology of black metal music scenes. This is because, despite the real and contrived occultism and hierarchical stratification inherent in these scenes, there is a basic underlying communitas produced through experiential means, especially in the context of live performances. Sontag advocates transparence in art, "experiencing the luminous-ness of the thing in itself" (Sontag 1990:13), this again, may be re-categorized to refer to a 'mythic' sense of wonder at what is being both observed, and invoked within a crowd. When applied to black metal performances this can be observed in different sections of the crowd, such as those in a state of rapture, those who are observing and analyzing, or those who are simply attending but are uninterested or even hostile. It is sometimes possible to make the distinction between those who are caught up in an ecstatic 'mythic' consciousness, and those who are engaged in acts of interpretation.

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Benjamin refers to something similar to these modes of reception (2007) when he describes the capacity for art in the modern/contemporary age to manipulate the masses by inducing them to complete tasks in a state of distraction (2007:240).

> Distraction as provided by art presents covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the masses. (Benjamin 2007:240)

At black metal concerts I have attended over the past few years both states of attention have been apparent in the crowd and within my own organization of attention. In the last chapter I described a festival for which the magick of transcendental and immediate experience simply did not happen for me (that is not to say that it did not happen for other members of the crowd). Whereas at Dunkelheit festival which shall be described in detail in the following sections, the sacred experience was very successfully evoked by The Stone and Shining's performances.

Berger's phenomenological account of crowd structure and behavior at metal concerts hints at a similar separation and organization of attention (1999). In some of his descriptions of metal concerts, there are the moshers in front of the stage, who are often surrounded slightly further back by a group of people standing with their arms folded, gazing at the band in rapt attention. This arms folded subset, is often the section of the crowd who are musicians themselves and therefore are scrutinizing, and interpreting the performance in a professional capacity and in relation to their own abilities and possibilities. For the musicians in the crowd engaged in interpretation, events of a spectacular or sacred nature may be rarer in occurrence due to the musicians' proximity to a world that is open only to a select few. However as I witnessed at some concerts in Serbia, such as King Diamond (former vocalist with the band Mercyful Fate, a kvlt/classic

band who are considered to be one of the founders of black metal), this was an occasion when the musicians stopped interpreting and became fans/devotees again. On this occasion the normally composed members of the scene were totally won over, because the performance exceeded their expectations, allowing them to loose themselves to an awe inspiring show that adds to the repertoire of 'mythic' shows that they have witnessed. To put it another way, art as performance in this instance regained its mythic, sacred function.

In relation to live events, success rests in the bands ability to absolutely overwhelm the senses, on both individual and collective levels. Mind blowing concerts have the ability to induce ecstasis in the crowd, and the production of a state of being that Durkheim and others have termed 'collective effervescence' (1965). In order to further analyze the interaction between performer and audience, Mauss' theories concerning the reciprocal nature and the magical hold exerted by the 'gift' may be of use in the context of live performance analysis. Whereby, honor and prestige serve a similar purpose to the kula ring or valuable prestige goods. The reason being that the experience/product being exchanged goes far beyond paying for a ticket and receiving goods and services. During a live event there is an exchange of commonality offered through the ritual of performance. This is contingent upon the degree of successful interaction and exchange between performer and audience. This is the simultaneous risking of 'face', that takes place right from the moment a band steps onto the stage and begins their show. The first song played, or the first greeting given, is another version of the 'yotile', the clinching gift that is taken by force or by surprise (Mauss 1967:24), or in other terms, the opening bid, or the bid as understood by Glassie (1995).

Ceremony, Danger and Trials of Endurance.

> War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt of metallization of the human body. (Marinetti in Benjamin 2007:241)

Although the quote above is taken completely out of context, it brilliantly summarizes the aesthetic valorization of war, destruction and anti-human sentiment that black metal draws upon for its subject matter. Which leads neatly on to the following description of the physical rituals and conventions of the mosh pit.

The success of the exchange between band and audience is most apparent when a band manages to incite mass ecstasis in the form of a 'mosh pit'. This is the physical manifestation of power and reciprocity at a metal concert. A 'mosh pit' typically takes place amongst a section of the (mostly male) audience, in the throng directly in front of the stage. When the music reaches a suitable tempo, people begin to violently slam their bodies, fists and elbows into one another. The physical stance is one with feet set widely apart for balance, but also in order to stand your ground when pushing and shoving (and vice versa) the crowd. The arms are held in a raised position similar to a low kick-boxing stance. Elbows and fists are swung wildly, people shove one another across the dance floor and occasionally two or more people will grapple and swing each other around in tight circles, slamming into the rest of the crowd as they move. These motions change and speed up or slow down depending on the tempo of the song or the exhortations of the band. The membership of the mosh pit also changes frequently as people join and leave depending on the song, mood or energy levels. One does not necessarily need to be fit in order to stay upright in the pit (although fitness is certainly an advantage), as the presence

of occasionally huge beer gutted older metal-heads will attest. Most gigs I attended in Serbia generally had the presence of a huge old metal-head who would place himself and his massive belly in the center of the pit and just headbang and flail his huge arms about, flattening anyone caught on either side.

Despite the violence and appearance of chaos in a mosh pit, it is a space that is not without conventions and practices that tend be reproduced wherever a mosh pit occurs. For example, if someone falls to the ground they are generally picked up straight away. That is, unless they have been knocked to the ground for a particular transgression, such as inappropriate kicking or punching. In these cases, quite often a few people in the pit will deliberately target someone who is transgressing and single them out by using excessive force, (sometimes) provoking a standoff or a fight. When a fight does break out, in the majority of cases the rest of the crowd will intervene and separate the opponents. As a result of the fact that belligerents know that the crowd will break up a fight, there is often a more excessive display of bravado than would have occurred in different circumstances such as outside a venue, or at the bar.

The mosh pit provides opportunities for self-aggrandizement through violence, particularly amongst young men who have the energy to stay in the pit for the whole duration of a bands performance. In these situations a person makes their presence conspicuous by pushing, punching and shoving others to the limits of acceptable behavior, usually in time with the music. Self-aggrandizement only succeeds and is tolerated where acts of ritualized bonding occurs, certain protocols must be followed, and eye contact must be made before grappling with a stranger. If a mosher is particularly ferocious he must also inspire others to the same kind of behavior and gauge the mood of the crowd. If a person fails to do this they risk being singled out in the mosh pit and attacked.

Interestingly, within some mosh pits there is theoretically, the appearance of small-scale egalitarianism and communal solidarity, coupled with a social-Darwinist (Spenserist) ethos observable at these events. Tsitsos (in Berger: 1999:199), and Kahn-Harris (2007) have each described mosh pits in similar ways, as "proving grounds" in which "those who are too weak must be forcibly eliminated", however the apparent chaos of the mosh pit is in reality underscored by an ethos of control. Kahn-Harris gives an example of this emphasis on control and asceticism in relation to the Norwegian black metal scene, where during the early 1990s they adopted the slogan 'No fun, No Mosh, No Core' (2007:46). This was a stance adopted in antipathy to the "communal solidarity" and "bonhomie", "that death mettallers frequently expressed", in their mosh pits, which was seen as "contrary to the 'seriousness' required to be a Satanic mettaller" (Kahn-Harris 2007:45). While this stance may be observed amongst a minority of older black metal fans and some musicians at central European and Balkan, gigs it is probably more applicable to the Scandinavian black metal scene. Generally any successful black metal gig I have attended in the Balkans has featured a ferocious mosh pit, even at gigs for which there were small numbers in attendance.

Most bands will often arrange the songs on their set list in such a way as to take account of faster songs during which they know fans will want to go crazy and then follow these songs with slightly slower numbers in order to allow people to catch their breath. This highly ritualized behavior functions to reward both the individual and the collective; a successful mosh pit will enhance both the prestige of the band and the audience. For most metal bands a mosh pit is a conspicuously obvious sign that their music is affecting the audience. In turn a band will generally respond to this by rewarding their fans with encores, and/or performances of old favorite songs that may not originally

have been on the set list. The presence of violent fans and rough mosh pits is a source of great pride to many bands, and in terms of acts that merge the black metal and skinhead styles, the presence of tough skinheads in the pit can hugely enhance a bands deviant prestige. This also is an aspect of crowd interaction that contains the potential for myth making, through flirtations with fascistic gestures and the repercussions that may ensue from such gestures (as described in the previous chapter). For example Under the Black Sun festival in Germany, is regularly patrolled by the police due to rumors of people using nazi symbols or gestures. Yet it was a performer named Maniac, and not the fans, who caused most controversy at a German black metal festival by appearing onstage with a swastika carved into his forehead. Though this was later explained as an attempt to "provoke and piss off German fans" rather than as a political statement, and Maniac's lifestyle and performances would support this assertion as it is utterly at odds with the often ascetic and disciplined ethos of the national socialist black metal scene (see previous chapter). This technique of insulting and inciting a crowd in order to evoke ecstasis is by no means new, and even renowned anti-monarchist John Lydon of PIL, (and formerly The Sex Pistols) used it recently by wearing a union jack t-shirt in order to provoke fans at an Irish concert in 2010.

For most fans the mosh pit is a source of both local/national/regional pride and an opportunity to successfully reproduce what is to many, an essential component of their music scene. During my fieldwork in Beograd, a friend who books concerts for bands and runs a black metal distribution label, informed me of one Russian and two Scandinavian bands who agreed to play in Serbia on an almost no profit basis due to the fact that the country has a reputation for fan fanaticism at concerts.

Strategic Distance and a Refusal to Plead for Approval.

Whereas for Dante, Sontag maintains that it may once have been revolutionary to "design works of art so that they might be experienced on several levels", "now it is not so revolutionary" (Sontag 1990:13). In accordance with Sontag's argument, interpretation is another level, one that does not emanate from the artwork itself but is described as a "principle of redundancy which is the principle affliction of modern life" (Sontag 1990:13). This phenomenon of art being understood and interpreted on multiple levels could also be applied to music scenes. Particularly so, if we accept the premise that contemporary modernity is so characterized by an overproduction of forms images and sounds, instantaneous gratification (online) and a de-sacralization of art and music through mechanical reproduction, and overproduction. This overproduction also means that peoples relationships to music are often quite superficial nowadays, when compared to the relationship people had with music when everything had to be bought or traded in physical as opposed to digital formats. The distinction between music formats and cultural capital accruing from such distinctions is discussed more comprehensively in chapter three which alludes to Kozeljnik's obsessive-curator attitude to his music collection.

However live performances are one of the most effective means that bands have, of countering this trend towards superficial relationships between fans and music, as it is possible to categorize successful live shows as 'total phenomena' along the lines prescribed by Mauss:

> It is religious, mythological and shamanistic because the chiefs taking part are incarnations of gods and ancestors", "whose dances they dance and whose spirits posses them. It is economic; and one has to asses the value, importance, causes and effects of transactions which are enormous", "The potlatch is also a phenomenon of social morphology; the reunion of tribes, clans, families and great excitement. People fraternize but at the same time remain strangers; community of interest and opposition are revealed

constantly in a great whirl of business. (Mauss 1967:37-37)

All of these criteria are easily met at black metal festivals, through the blend of commerce, ritual, tribal discourse and most crucially; community-making, in which people fraternize (quite closely through the mosh pit), bouts of drinking and socializing. These interactions are often intense but transient relationships, where an elevated sense of collective unity is experienced, whilst at the same time people essentially remain strangers, and return to the mundane after the event.

When a band performs a concert, their fans respond in emotional, instinctive and sensual ways. Sontag states that "real art has the capacity to make us nervous" but I'm sure it wouldn't be stretching her thesis too far to suggest that 'real' art also has the capacity to make us ecstatic (1990:8). So when a band performs, there is a strong desire on the part of the fan to want the 'art' to be brilliant and overwhelming. People generally don't turn up at concerts expecting to hate the band (multi-band shows, and support bands perhaps are an exception) but at the same time there is an expectation which must be lived up to and in black metal this can be quite difficult. This expectation fuels anticipation, desire, and the utilization of cultural knowledge and capital, which to a greater or lesser degree determines the manner in which art as performance is perceived and received within music scenes.

This is where the concept of genre is of particular relevance, because to some musicians and fans, it is highly important that a band's music should remain within the confines and dictates of their respective genre (for a more detailed discussion of genre, see end of chapter three). With regards to black metal and in particular, live performances, the behavior and interaction between audience and performers are quite different from

typical rock and pop bands and audiences. Due to the misanthropic aesthetic of black metal, it would be inappropriate for bands to plead (to seek approval, affection, high-fives, thumbs-up etc.) with the audience and reach out and touch people in the manner typical of many rock bands. For example a black metal band would invoke ridicule and deeply undermine their 'aura of darkness' by jogging energetically onstage and 'high-fiving' the front row of the audience. Instead most black metal bands maintain a strategic distance from the crowd, and interaction occurs mainly in the form of menacing grimaces and bands and audiences raising the sign of the horns or an inverted cross with their fingers and arms (see the following image).

Raising the sign of the horns at a Koldbrann concert in Beograd. (Photo taken by

author in 2006).

Recent scholarship based on theories concerning ' *The Gift'* by Mauss describes exchange and mutuality as "solidarity making social machinery" (Trautmann 2000:134). The gift and forms of exchange whereby prestige is both at stake and amenable to enhancement are also the mechanism through which elite's are built and power is created and sustained. Within the black metal scene, power and prestige are created and maintained by winning over new audiences and retaining old ones, through touring and strategic alliances between bands and 'underground' recording and distribution labels. This makes it economically possible for some individuals to live totally 'within' the scene, by working in scene related (often entrepreneurial) enterprises. As is the case with Kozeljnik and Urok mentioned in chapter three. Thus avoiding pressure to adopt 'normal' dress styles, cut long hair (or grow it, as many black metal scene members have shaved heads), or engage in unrelated wage labour that impinges upon a black metal lifestyle and detracts from time spent engaging with the scene. The descriptions in the following sections are an example of a gig where everything simply works. The exchange takes, place, communitas is engaged in and the prestige of the bands is confirmed through a reciprocal spectacle which enhances their 'aura' and confirms scene myths.

At Dunkelheit, festival, there was many of The Stones Pan-Slavic fans from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic who knew their lyrics by heart and who gave them a deeply appreciative welcome. The music of The Stone and their performances could be said to portray elements that rigidly conform to the dictates of 'old school', Slavic black metal. They always wear 'corpsepaint' when playing live, as well as armbands studded with six inch nails and torn black denim and leather clothes, and on special occasions they also fire breath on stage. Importantly for their fans, the music (up to that point) contains no indexical tinges or sounds from anything recognizably different

from straight forward Satanic-Pagan black metal. While there are many bands that some black metal scene members would describe as derivative and unoriginal for adhering so rigidly to genre stereotypes, for The Stone this is one of their strengths. They have a powerful sound that although constructed in a technically complex manner, is at the same time accessible to non-Serbian speakers due to way that The Stone's music is so instantly recognizable as something that could only ever be, 'tr00' black metal. This comes across very effectively when they play live as the music is aurally violent, with rising tempos, accompanied by screamed vocals mixed with clearly sung and chanted choruses. Most of their lyrics are based upon a syncretic fusion of Slavic-Pagan mythology and Satanism that lends itself to anthemic singing along by the crowd, due to catchy choruses that are easily picked up by fans. Amusingly for the band this often happens in countries outside of Serbia and fans often try to sing along to Serbian lyrics, which they clearly cannot, understand. On this occasion at Dunkelheit, they also attracted a small skinhead following who gave salutes and chanted "Slavonic Power" and "Slava Smrtni", a lyric from one of The Stone's songs that translates as 'glory to death'. In order to describe the power and intensity of The Stone that night, I have included a description of their performance based upon field notes taken at the time (sections from field notes are indented).

> Just before the band begin, Veliki Marko walks through the dry ice and places several red glass funeral candles at the front of the stage. As the band take to the stage and begin strapping on their instruments, Urok emerges with a flaming torch and sprays a huge fireball from his mouth that scorches the low ceiling and instantly silences the murmur and shuffling of the crowd. The fire breathing was truly spectacular and brilliantly enhanced the atmosphere, especially within the confines of this crowed sweaty venue.

Anyone standing in front of the stage received an oily mist of pungent white spirits that sprayed onto their bodies from Urok's fire-breathing. At the back of my mind I kept thinking that there was also a danger that now the flame might spray too low and injure or set fire to someone, though at least there's plenty of beer to douse the flames if it does happen. Or if the flames were sprayed too high the low ceiling could have caught fire and there was no way that everyone would make it out of this tiny cramped venue alive.

Though aside from this, the flames seem to act as a focus that spurs the band and audience, effectively arresting people's attention and escalating the sense that something spectacular is about to take place. The flames were dramatically increasing people's sense of expectation, and there was now a large crowd shoving up toward the stage and streaming in from the bar. Perhaps the reason for this was because; after giving the crowd the gift of fire, it is expected that the band must follow this up with a performance that lives up to the sense of expectation that has been invoked. With the fiery entrance that no other band had used, The Stone had very forcefully arrested every-bodies attention (overall a very successful 'yotile' Mauss 1967:24).

Urok from the The Stone, fire-breathing at a festival in Slovenia (Photo taken by author 2007).

As has always been my experience at concerts of The Stone, the band delivers and exceeds people's expectations. The singer Glad (whose pseudonym derives from an archaic Serbian word meaning 'the hunger') was exceptionally charismatic, right from the beginning he was provoking a strong reaction as he incited the crowd with his outstretched arms adorned with spikes and announced each song in a menacing growled voice. With his waist length, slick black hair half covering his grim corpse- painted visage, I was reminded of the ghosts in Asian horror films, whereby the face of the

spirit is always partially concealed by a mass of long black hair, and when it is revealed is something terrifying to behold. Standing at well over six-foot tall, Glad tends to absolutely dominate the stage and this gig is no exception. His height, outstretched arms, natural arrogant swagger, and all the leather, spikes and tattoos, really set him apart from all of the previous vocalists that day.

Throughout their entire show there was a furious mosh pit in front of the stage. Many men ended up bloodied, beer soaked and topless, swinging punches, slamming into each other and occasionally lifting people above their heads to crowd surf.

Urok whose expression was normally quite genial by black metal standards, was utterly transformed by his corpse paint. Now he wielded his bass guitar with a demonic leering expression that suggested a sinister sense of disgust towards humanity. When Urok moved to the front of the stage he waved the neck of his guitar out over the heads at the front of the stage in a manner that threatened decapitation if anyone came too close. Urok also has a violent leery demeanour, he incited the mosh pit by simply staring down and raising his outstretched palm upwards. This subtle gesture signalled an escalation in violence as the tempo of the song speeded up and the pit slammed into the people crushed up against the front of the stage.

Mid way through The Stone's set a fight broke out between myself and a drunken Czech skinhead whom I had prevented from bullying a young black metal fan earlier. The fight started with a punch to the back of my head, I spun round and the guy responsible pretended to ignore the punch, so

I shoved him into the mosh pit and shouted "fuck you". He laughed and shouted hey man it was an accident. I replied "well it fucking better not happen again", then his friend shoved me from behind and they both tried to knock me over. However his friend was sent sprawling by a kick from a tall German skinhead who had helped me to intervene earlier, and Veliki Marko and Draganna (Urok's girlfriend at the time) pulled me aside handed me a beer to calm things down. I then glanced up at Urok onstage who smiled briefly in reassuring acknowledgement before staring over at the two Czech skinheads who were moving towards the bar.

Now that the guys had left, Veliki Marko and I slammed back our beers and swung each other round the mosh pit, crashing into people and shoving and punching in time with the band as we worked off the tension and distraction of the previous scuffle. Veliki Marko is a bit of a gladiator in the mosh pit, with plenty of weight to keep him balanced and the strength to shove people flying as he thrashes about. He doesn't always spend a long time in the pit, but when he does enter he causes maximum havoc and damage to all those around him.

By the time The Stone finish their set, everyone up front is exhausted, ecstatic and drenched in alcohol and sweat. The band had won a lot of new fans that night with an intensity that confirmed their status within elite Slavic black metal. By way of finale, the band raised the sign of the horns to the crowd, shout 'slava' and walk off stage in a cloud of dry-ice. Veliki Marko then steps onto the stage to extinguish the funeral candles, effectively signalling the end of the show.

Glad, vocalist from *The Stone* photo taken by author at Dunkelheit festival 2007.

There could be no doubt in people's minds that something transcendental and spectacular had taken place. During The Stone's performance peoples expressions were aggressive, glaring at the band, with lots of macho posturing and a relentless mosh pit that resulted in real and symbolic violence. Yet when the band had finished their performance,

and the house lights came back on, people's expressions were transformed; they walked out into the brightness of the venue's bar grinning and exhausted. Excited chatter could be heard in several languages, all praising the spectacular nature of the performance, with air guitar, and drumming gestures, that spoke an international metal-language of approval and reverence.

The Stone's music and performance serve as a prime example of a stereotypical Slavic black metal band who may comfortably remain, utterly within the confines of the genre without any hint of genre leaking or indexical tinge (as described by Bauman & Briggs 1992). As such The Stone are an extremely proficient band, who are entirely capable of recreating this atmosphere successfully at the majority of their concerts which I have attended. With some of the band members, with whom I have developed close friendships with over the years, their change from normal to stage persona is surprisingly dramatic. With Kozeljnik, he becomes a mask of concentration and virtuosity as he plays guitar. He tends to engage less with the audience, directing the other bands members with barely perceptible nods and gestures during songs. Glad is a born front-man and although the corpse-paint radically changes his appearance, it just emphasises his normally intimidating presence. For Urok however, the corpsepaint is utterly transformative. His naturally calm, and generally friendly demeanour shift radically when he is onstage changing from amiable metal-head to a demonic leering black metal hooligan. More so when playing bass with The Stone (as opposed to his role as keyboard player in May Result), as he has the freedom to move around the stage, glaring into the crowd and snarling towards the mosh pit. Collectively they are the ultimate incarnation of the "metallized body" evoked by Marinetti (in Benjamin 2007:241) and an aesthetic of war and destruction personified as music.

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Another black metal band who elicited a similarly profound response at Dunkelheit, but using significantly different stylistic techniques was the band Shining, from Scandinavia. Whereas The Stone were exciting and powerful in their black metal orthodoxy. Shining strayed far from typical black metal conventions, alienating the skinhead section of the crowd, but utterly captivating a larger group, through genuine shock, disgust and awe.

Again I shall draw upon field notes to convey a sense of what took place (indented sections).

> Although the slow, sinister music and spectacle was impressive at the beginning of the show, the crowd responded in quite a muted way. I believe that this was because the singer, Kvaforth, was so provocative, so transgressive and utterly different to every other band that had played this festival. Many people were too stunned, amazed or shocked to respond in the manner they had to previous bands, and the music although effective and well received, wasn't the kind that you could simply bang your head to and wave the sign of the horns. However, most of the crowd was deeply impressed, yet lacked the means with which to express their appreciation.

> At the end of the second song Kvaforth actually smiled, tilted his head to one side, pressed his palms together and gestured to the crowd that it would be appropriate to clap at this point. This was an extremely odd gesture within the context of this music scene, but one which was reciprocated rapturously. To this day I have still never seen a black metal audience clapping their hands in appreciation, as though they were at an opera or a

classical recital. These odd gestures can be explained by the fact that people were too shocked to show appreciation in the usual manner, as Shining's music doesn't always suit the kind of violent communitas of the mosh pit that other bands such as The Stone typically evoke.

Shining's music tends to defy and stray way beyond typical black metal genre confines, many people in the crowd at Dunkelheit were caught off guard and left almost speechless at the end of each song. Shining's style borrows heavily from ambient jazz inspired sound-scapes. It was also noticeably slower and quite metronomic, rising and falling to crescendos, as opposed to the furious paced sonic barrage that The Stone had offered up.

When the music was slow and creeping, Kvaforth, the tall skinny singer who was topless, wearing black leather trousers and a bullet belt, kept his back to the audience. He moved slowly around the stage, tenderly touching the other band members as he passed, swigging alternately from a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey, and another bottle containing animal blood. His arms, chest and torso were absolutely covered in a latticework of razor blade scars, to such an extent that there was barely a trace of unscarred skin on his lower arms. When he had emerged onstage he was bleeding from approximately 12 large knife cuts on his arms, ribcage, chest and stomach. He drooled whiskey and blood onto his chest and after a while was completely soaked with slick red streaks all over his torso. Kvaforth also used a large hunting knife to add a few more cuts during the show. This cutting was carried out slowly, and he simultaneously grimaced and rolled his eyes back in ecstasy as the knife slid along his flesh and opened fresh

new cuts that trickled down his arms.

Kvaforth vocalist from *Shining* (Photo taken from the band's www.myspace.com

profile).

Another feature of Kvaforth's behavior that made this performance so unique in

the context of this festival; was the manner in which the blood drinking and shedding was

performed in such a non-macho way. The majority of male fronted black metal bands tend

to be unambiguously macho, emphasizing power, control, and a menacing dark persona,

that often draws upon pain and suffering but in a non-cathartic and grim manner. Kvaforth

completely differed from this type of display, his performance invoked a sense that this person was sharing with the crowd a painful and cathartic aspect of his personality through the medium of live music. Kvaforth behaved in complete contrast to the excessively masculine, power dominated performances of the other bands .

More so than any previous black metal band, Shining exposed weakness, pain, and sexual ambiguity. Kvaforth's behavior was simultaneously dangerous, threatening (in terms of blood hygiene), unnerving and camp. He blew kisses to the audience in between spraying mouthfuls of blood into the front rows. A few men and women at the front of the crowd went absolutely crazy, grasping his legs and begging him to share the primal substance with them. He then embraced a few male and female fans with his blood soaked arms; kissed their faces and pressed his blood soaked face into theirs. Some of the skinheads, standing further back from the stage were utterly disgusted, shaking their heads and screaming insults at Kvaforth, as he smiled back at them whilst his fans reached out to touch is legs. I thought he looked like some half-crazed blood god, blissed-out and seeking to forgive those who couldn't understand his strange form of love.

Unusually for a black metal concert (and the scene in general) it struck me that there was a pronounced and deliberate sexual ambiguity to Kvaforth's performance. Kvaforth then writhed erotically around the stage with his hand inside his leather trousers groping himself and rolling his eyeballs back in melancholic ecstasy.

For the final song Kvaforth said that he found Czech girls to be

extremely beautiful but wished that they would do something for him. Then

he screamed "YOU MUST SUBMIT TO SELF DESTRUCTION" and the

band launched into a thundering rendition of one of their most famous songs

(a song glorifying suicide and self-harm which Kvaforth composed when he

was fourteen years of age). This was one of only a few songs by the band

which has a tempo suited to creating a mosh pit. As soon as the first few

chords were struck, the crowd went absolutely insane, surging back and

forth, pushing toward the stage and initiating a violent and fanatical mosh

pit. Fists and elbows flew in every direction as blood soaked fans in front

fell back into the crowd surging in all directions as people slammed into and

fell out of the mosh pit.

The conclusion to this section shall be kept short, as the preamble leading up to

this section of fieldnotes was long, and loaded with theory which placed an emphasis on

the transformative nature of live performance. Several frameworks have been presented,

but few questions have been answered, rather the questions should be left to hang in the

ether. Namely is it possible to write an 'anthromusicology' of live music events and can

this be informed by an emphasis on participant observation and ethnography, as distinct

from ethnomusicology which focuses on sound structure?

This section contained barely a mention of song lyrics and sound structures, the

emphasis throughout was on performance and it's ability effect people, and enact

transformation, even if this transformation is only temporal and fleeting. Nonetheless I

hope this chapter has assisted in understanding of the manner in which the spirit or 'hua'

(Mauss 1967) of the gift can be thought about in terms of the ways in which a

contemporary music scene is engaged in a strangely primitive form of commerce. The commerce of ritual, veneration, re-making a neo-tribe (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004) through both the entrenchment of orthodoxies and the breaking of taboos, to use a secular description. A less secular reading, of the performances, drawing upon Sontag and Benjamin could emphasize the immediacy, the spectacle and transcendental nature of what had taken place. Some of Benjamin's warnings and predictions of the dangerous power of art under Fascism (although I suspect the case is the same for Communists), the power to "render politics aesthetic" has definitely taken place (200&:241). But this has not culminated in "war" as Benjamin predicted, at least not war in a negative sense, rather a zeitgeist of connectedness that is at the heart of this scenes volkish appeal.

Therefore, the two performances just described had been the 'gift'(Mauss 1967), the exchange of mutuality, the creation of bonds between audience and performer. These performances were 'spirit of the thing given' (Mauss 1967), the intangible gift which establishes the elite, simultaneously producing and enhancing a sense of prestige for both performer and participant through the enactment of transcendental spectacle. The Stone and Shining had met and exceeded expectation. A symbiotic sense of collective effervescence had been offered and reciprocated. Bonds of commonality were forged and the scene, community or neo-tribe had successfully reproduced itself according to the expectation and orthodoxies of the black metal genre.

In the case of The Stone from Serbia, their music rigidly adhered to the confines and orthodoxies of the genre (albeit, a genre that they themselves were instrumental in creating). Therefore they were under pressure to perform to the absolute limit of their abilities. The reason being, that in this case novelty could not be relied upon to win over an audience, some of whom were unfamiliar with The Stone's music. It was through sheer

force of personality, an invoking of occult magick through performance, ritual and professional musicianship that The Stone ensured their status as 'elite black metal'.

However with Shining from Norway, most of their songs did not posses the same frantic tempo and heavy beat necessary to incite a violent mosh pit, which would normally be a typical feature of black metal performance and reciprocity. It was the visceral spectacle of Shining's performance and bloodletting which provided a novel and for some, mythic spectacle. This novelty, danger and transgression are the essence of 'the thing given' which allowed the band to stray beyond genre confines and so successfully produce the experience of collective effervescence in what is typically an extremely conservative music scene.

Kvaforth relaxing after a performance (photo scanned from the bands www.myspace.com profile).

Conclusion.

The belief in the possibility of widespread social change and anti-authoritarianism of sixties and seventies music scenes is conspicuously absent in the main 'alternative' styles of music nowadays. Perhaps this is the fulfillment of the famously misinterpreted statement by Margaret Thatcher: "there is no society, only the individual". Many contemporary forms of music, despite their mass appeal and the binding spectacle of their concerts, tend to favor brief ecstasis amongst strangers as opposed to forging long-term relationships. The introduction of the drug ecstasy into nineteen nineties music scenes has meant that subcultural capitol and face-to-face scene familiarity was of decreasing importance; as less and less time was devoted to 'street' scenes. This deficit of face-to-face familiarity was in some ways compensated for by the ecstasy drug's capacity to produce a very powerful but temporary collective effervescence at the weekends, and a return to mundane nine-to-five normality during the working week. However, this was not the full story, some music scenes never died out or changed beyond recognition through stylistic promiscuity. There is a refuge to be found in places where people still feel naturally at ease in the company of friends, away from the zoned-out distraction of the computer screen a refuge from the bewildering flux of contemporary modernity. Ironically the Serbian black metal scene, a scene notorious for its misanthropic aesthetic, is one of these spaces where a close-knit face to face neo-tribe survives.

Throughout this thesis I have sought to describe and analyze the quality of connectedness between members of the Serbian black metal scene. In chapter one, I

looked at the descriptive criteria that have been used in order to understand music scenes in the past. In the early stages of this thesis, dating from a period in 2006 when every gleaned morsel was read with a passion fed by the newness of the subject, there was a utility to the collection of subcultural theories. This collecting was necessary in order to compose a vocabulary that I clung to whilst trying to make sense of my immersion into the world of Serbian black metal. This is when the scene mythologies, the spectacle, the defining features that shape and innovate the genre were analyzed. This facilitated an understand of the exotic cosmology that confronted me during the first few months of fieldwork. Eventually the collection of scenically illustrative data begun to make sense in light of my experiences in Serbia and it became easier to move past the stereotypes that characterized both black metal and Serbian society in general.

In chapter two, some ethnographic 'insertion scenes' were provided in order to ground the theoretical musings of chapter one. Namely the description of my first meeting with Veljko and the guys from Novi Sad. This encounter incorporated elements of familiar Balkan themes, particularly hospitality, but within the context of black metal scene habitus and a negotiation of alter-political subject positioning. One of the themes which informed the early parts of this thesis was to take an idea used by Steven Feld; that one should try to understand a music's sound in relation to its surrounding social structure (1990), except here, the idea was modified in order to understand the scene structure in relation to social structure. By this point in the thesis the object under scrutiny was becoming clearer. Rather than seek understanding in contemporary explanations of the alter-political aspects of identity work and scene formation; Huizinga's thesis (1955) on the play element in human culture provided a theoretical breakthrough. Huizinga's theories provided a lens through which I could analyze and describe the zeitgeist of

counter-historicism that began to inform my understanding of the scene. Whereas some contemporary commentators have studied music scenes with strong patriotic and racialized outlooks from a perspective whereby those scenes are to be condemned rather than understood. Huizinga's theories (1955) on the way in which human interactions are informed by a 'play' element, allowed for novel insights that avoid overtly politicized and/or ethnocentric conclusions.

In chapter three the theme of moral outrage was explored with reference to some of the ways in which moral outrage has been deployed strategically. This chapter also suggests an 'escalation theory' as an explanation for the increase in 'extremity' of the aesthetics and concepts used in the wider black metal scene. One of the underlying themes throughout any study of a music scene; is the means through which links between the local and global manifest themselves. Essentially the black metal scene crystallized as a genre during the early nineteen nineties in Scandinavia. Therefore the relevance of locality and a scenes potential to form in other countries is also explored. Freidman's "uber' optimistic 'flat world' hypothesis (2006) adds to an understanding of how the black metal scene spread so prolifically. However the pessimistic specter of Adorno and Horkheimer (2001, 2002) are used as a counter to Freidman's optimism at the prospect of a 'flat world'.

In chapter four a gendered analysis is used to make sense of occasions during fieldwork that could otherwise be understood as mistakes and potential conflicts. Of course this is a familiar trope in anthropology as it is within moments (or extended periods) of questioning self-doubt social transgressions and periods during which informants loose patience with an ethnographer that revealing moments occur. An argument with Glad, resulted in one of those moments where the degrees of

connectedness between individuals in the Serbian black metal scene became apparent

when that sense of connectedness was briefly threatened. The concept of

heteronormativity and homophobia within the scene was also touched upon, again in a

manner the relates the scene to Serbian social and religious structures.

Chapter five represents a diversion from Serbia and an exploration of the wider

Slavic black metal scene at a concert that took place in Sibiu in Romania. This chapter in

addition to exploring some of the more problematic aspects of the wider black metal

scenes politics, also plays with the genres of travel writing and expectations of

homogeneity and 'otherness'. The final sections of chapter five also question the nature of

EU identity; in light of the collapse of hegemonic forms of affiliation that could be said to

be in a state of flux since the collapse of Communism in central and eastern Europe. As

this thesis has avoided such tropes as post-socialism and an analysis of wider political

structures in the Balkans, chapter five comes closest to discussing the social frameworks

in which the black metal scene operates. However the conditions of possibility that allows

the black metal and national socialist black metal scenes to flourish is predicated on a flat

world hypothesis described in the previous chapter. Therefore the decision to avoid post-

socialism theory was necessary in order not to force the data into unsuitable categories

simply for the sake of academic tidying up. The decision to avoid the post-socialist

literature on the Balkans may seem like an omission on the part of this thesis, however it

was also quite deliberate because of the face to face nature of the participant observation

and the fact that politics as typically expressed through right/left and party allegiances

was not a subject of discussion during the project. Most people to whom I spoke were

quite disengaged from national politics and those who were active treated politics and

music as two separate spheres. If a political analysis was brought into this thesis it was

intended more in the spirit of 'the personal is political' whereby styles are read as social codes.

In the "Gift and Collective Effervescence" chapter, there is another bout of play engaged in. This time with regards to the style of writing and analysis in ethnography. Here Sontag's "*Against Interpretation*" is used as a manifesto that combines quasi-occult, sacred understandings of collective effervescence; with a call to leave aside the crutch-like Freudian interpretations of music performance as art. Walter Benjamin's beautifully mystic analysis of the role of the "*Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*" (2007) is also touched upon in order to expand the criteria through which the black metal scene is understood to function as an artistic counter-religious form of collectivity.

Serbian Black Metal and the Collision of Past, Present and Future.

Over the past two centuries beginning with the "*Twilight of the Idols*" (Nietzsche 2007) and culminating in the twilight of the Cold War; we have witnessed the birth and decline of once great mass movements whose ideas held sway over vast populations. This occurred in a mode previously unimaginable since the height of the Roman empire. These vast movements were easily characterized through the real, forced, and imagined consensus that inhered through the political mono-cultures of democracy, communism, fascism and socialism. Each political discourse was readily identifiable as a 'type' that can be further understood and categorized into sub-fields such as liberalism, centrist, statist, free market orientated etc. But overall the main taxonomic categories ranged across a determinative and obvious right-to-left ideological axis, through which parties and individuals could be positioned as emblematic of a particular set of ideals. Due to our current state of massive and instantaneous data production, contemporary political

expression can no longer be easily identified as, nor grouped together under the ideologically determinative positions on a left/right orientation.

The technique people use to self-educate these days (as political education is largely absent in western pre-third level institutions) is no longer through deep immersion in a course of study with narrow but rigorous scope. For example up to the outbreak of the two World Wars it would have been the norm for a student of ancient Rome to have read all six or seven volumes (depending on edition; J.B. Bury ed. 1909, Roper ed. 1993) of Gibbon's *"History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire".* Although not uncontroversial, Gibbon's work was considered authoritative, definitive and emblematic of people's sense of confidence in the ideas of modernity and progress. These were the so called progressive ideas that held sway during the imperialist zeitgeist of pre-war Britain and Europe. Aside from the disastrous human legacy of imperialism and colonialism, the physical expressions of the ambition and confidence of the era can be found in the massive monument building projects, the technical ingenuity of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, or the bold and confident exposed-structure design of the Eiffel Tower. Overall these achievements are in part based on a social model that largely understood and respected hierarchies and structure in most aspects of life.

Following the two world wars this was no longer the case. Hierarchies were becoming less stable and decreasingly capable of delivering on promises to improve people's standards of living. The widespread popularity of cheaply printed paperbacks and increasing levels of literacy post WWII also led to a breakdown in consensus towards the belief that the author is an authority on a subject. Macro studies such as Gibbon's fell out of favor; as being too heavily imbued with the spirit of empire and colonialism which existed at their time of writing and is reflected in the broad scope of the subject matter.

New models of learning and a massive increase and blurring between work and recreation time followed this breakdown in consensus. The race, gender and identity politics which preceded the rise of individualism in the 1980s provided an extended moment of mass-solidarity in face-to-face forms before the advent of flat world digital media.

Whereas these days, the techniques people use to self-educate derive from a basic template of formal education, augmented by a mixing of work and pleasure in a promiscuous free-love approach to study; learning and political engagement. Many people chose their sources of knowledge from random clusters of information, as opposed to deep engagement with a single source or school of thought. Authors, websites, newspapers, TV programs and online sources succeed based on a capacity to deliver information in concentrated bursts of pleasure that blend spectacle and an un-rigorous approach to knowledge. However, this need not necessarily be considered a failure amongst people to learn and 'apply' themselves. These techniques of self-education are becoming the norm and to a large degree are succeeding in a shrinking of the knowledge-is-power dichotomy. Foucault once maintained that having access to repertoires of knowledge is the source of institutional power:

> This new mechanism of power applies primarily to bodies and what they do rather than to the land and what it produces. It was a mechanism of power that made it possible to extract time an labor, rather than commodities and wealth, from bodies. It was a type of power exercised through constant surveillance and not in discontinuous fashion through chronological defined systems of taxation and obligation. It was a type of power that presupposed a closely meshed grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign and it therefore defined a new economy of power based upon the principle that there had to be an increase both in the subjugated forces and in the force and efficacy of that which subjugated them. (Foucault 2003:35-36)

This speaks of the dissemination of knowledge in clusters that interface in a highly promiscuous manner. In chapter five I describe a music scene which seeks to recreate the

zeitgeist of war in an imaginary of volkish brotherhood. This analysis of the NSBM scene posited the desire for a genre of connectedness, as a response to the fragmentation of imagined social cohesion's that followed the collapse of wider nationalisms. In contemporary party politics this collapse of widespread political consensus has resulted in the ephemeral 'everyman' quality that characterized western democracies over the past two decades, particularly in Ireland and during the Blair years in the UK.

In the Balkans there was also a fragmentation that followed the implosion of Yugoslavia, where instead of an 'everyman' politics there was a revival of bloody ethno-religious politics competing for consensus. Over the past decade there has been a widespread political apathy that has affected many young Serbs (Greenberg 2005). Out of this apathy, the desire for connectedness and definitive meaningful identities finds expression in movements such as the black metal scene and its schismatic tendency to be both individualist and at the same time deeply connected.

The geographic location of this thesis again harkens back to the refrain, 'at the heart of Europe' as its subject could easily be categorized as the 'other' within the 'other' when thinking about Serbia and the Balkan's relationship to the rest of Europe. This is particularly cogent when one considers the capacity of new social movements to enable the recycling of youth energy and aggression into forms of socializing and discipline that would previously have been the preserve of the military or in the case of Serbia, also the paramilitaries.

This is why the Serbian black metal scene is of such interest, due to the extent to which a supposedly misanthropic scene can inspire such fanatical devotion amongst its members. This devotion and degree of scene 'consensus' should be of strong interest to an anthropology anchored in contemporary modernity. Particularly so for an anthropology

with a nostalgic if morally relative eye which harks back to some of the classic and now problematic themes that once concerned the discipline. Throughout this thesis there have been various presentations and reformulations of discourse that seek to reinvigorate concepts such as; tribal identity, the maintenance of mythic/ancestral based forms of authority, youth culture as a rite of passage, liminality and social marginalization.

Therefore I thank the reader for their attention and playfully suggest that within anthropology's appreciation of multiculturalism, tolerance and human diversity, the reader may spare a thought for those who dedicate themselves so tirelessly to the cause of extreme intolerance and misanthropic anti-humanism.

POSTSCRIPT IN REMEMBRANCE OF 'GROM' MARKO SIMIC.

I had hoped to conclude this thesis about music (though featuring very little musical analysis) on a high note, as it has been a genuine pleasure to have become immersed in the world of Serbian black metal and all those who dwell in it.

But instead I am consumed with sadness and a stupid, impotent, directionless rage and anguish. My very close friend and the first person to ever respond to my initial emails enquiring about the Serbian black metal scene died recently in a car crash. I found out a few weeks after it happened through a message left on a myspace.com profile that I rarely have the chance to check in on lately. It read "bad news from Serbia", "our great friend Marko Simic has been killed in a car crash".

I couldn't, I refused to believe it, I wanted so much for it to be a cruel joke, or to wake from a horrible nightmare and dash to the phone to hear my friends soft, heavily accented voice on the other end. I rang his phone number and when his mother's voice answered I knew the terrible email must be true. I choked and buckled to my knees, as we tried to speak in broken sobs of misunderstood Serbian and English. It hurt so much more, hearing Marko's sweet little mother say those awful words. The kind little woman who would never allow us not to eat, who even as Marko and I slept off the effects of the previous nights festivities, would leave coffee and cakes beside our beds for when we awoke.

I choked out the words "I'm so sorry", we both said sorry and she said something in Serbian that I couldn't understand. I answered "da razumem" and we said goodbye. The terrible confirmation, the crushing profane finality that one of the greatest friends I have

ever known, has died. I knelt on the floor of my room in Dublin, so far away from Serbia and so far away from friends that knew Marko. Friends that I wish I was sitting with now, so we could knock back the beers and mourn together. To tell stories and briefly reanimate Marko for a few moments in our minds. Marko, the big black metal fan who would wear such incongruously out of place business-shirts and tan chino-slacks amongst the hordes in black.

I remember our first gig together; Koldbrann from Norway, who had recently signed to Grom records and were playing in the dingy communist relic of a club called SKC. I remember Marko in the crowd, huge (well over six foot tall) and conspicuous in a blue business shirt with a Koldbrann badge buttoned to his chest. Standing in the crowd raising his hands in the sign of the horns, sticking out his tongue and banging his head. "Total-fucking-black-metal", he didn't give a 'fuck' about his 'out of place clothes' or what people thought of him, "true as fuck, total kvlt"!

Each day since hearing the terrible news, at some point I loose myself in wet-eyed reverie. Thinking about the times I spent with Marko, our plans and schemes for the future. I remembered the time we went on holiday to Crno Gora with his girlfriend (recently fiance) Jelena. How we got lost in the fog up on the mountain, I remember our sickening fear, Jelena crying. We were fully scared, we had climbed to far with too little daylight and a cold wet fog had descended. According to the map the distance was shorter if we retraced the precarious ascent we had made and followed our footsteps back through the wet mud to the safety and shelter of the forest trail that led back to the village. The eerie silence as we guided each other back down, how deserted the mountain had become. How precarious each step seemed, much more difficult in the dull foggy descent, than the climb had been when it was bright and warm. Then the quiet elation as we reached the

forest and followed the trail back to a warm kafana. Once outside the kafana we looked back at the mist shrouded mountain and laughed nervously, "that was really fucking close" I said, Marko agreed and said "I never before realized how quickly it can get so fucking frightening". But together we had made it down. We then went into the kafana to eat, drink, and warm our sodden muddy clothes. We were drained, elated and together, we had kept our cool and got home safely.

Then I snap out of the reverie and he's gone! All thats left is sad crushing rage and despair as the powerlessness of knowing I'll never see Marko again comes back in full force. Later on, on the same day that I heard the terrible news, Marko's mother sent me an sms message, saying that I could come and visit them for a few days when I return to Serbia. And I so want to, if only to experience his presence again for a few moments, to dream that he might still be there. Marko, my hero (according to a news report of his death), the leader of the resistance in Uzice (OTPOR). My first contact with Serbia, the friend with whom I had plotted and schemed. We had schemed and dreamed of opening a hostel together in Durmitor someday. All of the plans we had made, I intended to show him Ireland, to take him on a tour of the distillery of his beloved Jameson whiskey. Now all I have left are words, pictures, relics and memories. In the rawness of grief they don't amount to fuck all, when I think of my dear giant friend whom I'll never forget – ever.

You will always be close to my thoughts, and the world is a darker, less funny place without you in it. Slava brate, if there is any merit in this thesis at all, it is because you extended the hand of friendship and brought me into your world!

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