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A Sonic Intervention Into Authenticity And Black Metal

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Abstract

This thesis is an intervention into the world of black metal and the role that authenticity plays within the politics of the subgenre. I explore the evolution and escalation that takes place between the theatrics, the music, and violence committed in the clamoring to be perceived as 'true' metal. Throughout my thesis I use a variety of approaches to create a holistic view of black metal as a subgenre and analyze the ways in which it evolved. My primary focus was studying the music itself, paired with lyrics and later subcultural analysis of my selected bands. As a fan and a scholar, I assert that authenticity not only plays a huge role in the politics of music subcultures, but for culture as a whole. In the case of this thesis, the politics of authenticity in the second wave of black metal may have resulted in arson, suicide, and murder and, at the very least, the reports of this behavior served as a foundational mythology for the subgenre since the 1990s. Overall, this thesis contributes to the new ways of studying music, subculture, and sound from a rhetorical perspective to trailblaze a path for future scholars in rhetorical, metal music, and sound studies.

Keywords: Authenticity, Black Metal, Music, Sonic Studies, Subculture

A Sonic Intervention into Authenticity and Black Metal

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Introduction

The inspiration to undertake this thesis project is based upon my own experiences and interest in music. Music has been my life up until now. From an early age, I have been in awe of a specific genre of music, heavy metal. The heavy metal bug caught me with a simple set of guitar riffs and howls that I have not been able to shake from my mind. It is not just the music itself. Heavy metal has given me a state of being, fashion, lore, and most importantly a diverse community full of people who are also dedicated to this genre of music. There is not a better feeling than going to a concert and seeing the sea of people who are all there for the same reason: to scream and slam together in its hellish harmony.

The genre of heavy metal, however, is so large and diverse that it has given birth to thousands of different bands and sounds since its inception. They range widely based upon geography, cultures, instruments, sonics, politics, etc. One of these subgenres is black metal, which is one of the most violent and transgressive of the heavy metal family, often associated with the cold winters, Satanism, and church burnings. The scene claims to not only be the 'true' continuation of metal, but also the 'evilest' of them all. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) write on the shifting of Norwegian bands to black metal, "Now they would dedicate themselves fully to the 'evil' and anti-social inclinations which made the Death Metal bands look like humanists in comparison." (p. 65). The purpose of this thesis is to explore the numerous ways that black metal asserts itself as this true evolution in metal music through its sonics and ideological outlook.

As a fan of this style of music myself, I have felt a duty to introduce the story and uniqueness of this subculture into my work. Due to my status as an academic and fan, often there will need to be a balance of personal insight and academic knowledge. Thankfully, within there are realms of academia that offer guides on how to create this balance, primarily Fandom and Metal Music Studies. Vist et al., (2021) assert that often our best work is the work that we put ourselves into. Academia as well has been one of the only places that has provided a space for something such as Fan Studies to flourish. Hence, I have decided to put a piece of me into this work by engaging with metal music, as it has played such a huge role in my life.

On that note, there is often a stigma placed upon black metal due to the prevalence of white nationalists and fascistic tendencies that exist within the subgenre. As supported by Brown (2018) and Kahn-Harris (2019), there is a history between metal, politics, and identity that needs to be discussed, recognized, and critiqued. As a white, masculine presenting fan, it is key for me to recognize my own positionality within this discussion. As Kahn-Harris (2019) notes, there are coded signifiers of power within heavy metal, centered around the 'metal identity triad.' This triad consists of the members of the subculture being: white, masculine, and heterosexual. This even exists within many of the academic and journalist sources that have written about the topic, even bordering on the edge of fascist propaganda. For example, one of my main sources, the book *Lords of Chaos*, written by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind often conducts interviews with known murderers and white nationalists often without seriously critiquing or questioning their interviewees. According to Kevin Coogan (1999), the book

paints a very strangely specific picture that rather than truly critiquing black metal, focuses heavily on its extremities that are tied to white supremacist movements in America and abroad, and instead of critiquing individuals such as Varg Vikernes, seemingly makes excuses for them. Coogan (1999) writes, "*LOC* has generally been perceived as an expose of a colorful music subculture, and it does indeed provide much valuable information about an otherwise inaccessible scene," he continues, "Yet what really makes the book fascinating is that its main author, Michael Moynihan, is himself an extreme rightist whose fusion of politics and aesthetic violence shapes a not-so-hidden sub current that runs throughout *LOC*" (p. 1). While the book itself is not considered a fascist text, especially due to the presence of journalist Didrik Søderlind and mainstream publishing, the text certainly has more hidden sympathies when covering the incidents during the second wave of black metal. Moynihan's and the text's limits need to be recognized as another attempt to reach out to the vulnerable sections of the subgenre steeped in whiteness.

One of my many reasons for writing this intervention as my thesis is to study the ways in which black metal constructs itself outside of this white paradigm. Although it cannot be fully removed, there are other aspects to explore within the story of bands such as Mercyful Fate and Mayhem that are worth telling. This thesis is designed to explore the rhetorical dynamics of each band's presentation of themselves as authentic. To explore these dynamics, I will focus on a single album by each band and attend to the ways each album was presented to audiences, its lyrical and sonic qualities. In this way, I seek to explore authenticity along multiple intersecting lines of visuality, marketing,

language, and sound. By doing this, I am going to address the various controversies, the sound, and rhetorically constructed culture surrounding black metal.

Pursuing this end, I begin in Chapter 1 with an examination of literature related to the concept of authenticity, especially as it relates to musical performers. I also lay out some of the broad history of the heavy metal genre and the diverse ways in which performers cast themselves as authentic. Chapter 1 concludes with a consideration of methods in which I employ a version of Philip Tagg's framework for exploring music through ideological, lyrical, and sonic qualities. I integrate Tagg's musicological analysis with scholars interested in rhetoric to craft a general framework for exploring authenticity within individual albums.

Chapter 2 offers the first case study, Mercyful Fate's 1984 album *Don't Break the Oath*. This was Mercyful Fate's last album before separating for a period while lead singer, King Diamond, pursued a successful solo career. I examine this album as representing a culmination of Mercyful Fate's initial musical career as a core representative of the first wave of black metal. Exploring the visual, marketing, lyrical, and sonic qualities of the album, I argue that *Don't Break the Oath* crafts a version of authentic evil that emphasizes theatricality.

Chapter 3 explores the rise of the second wave of black metal with Mayhem's 1987 EP, *Deathcrush*. This album stands in stark contrast to the earlier Mercyful Fate album and, in my analysis, presents a version of authenticity steeped in violence and

embracing its repulsive aftermath. This version of violent authenticity, as I will explore, eventually was seen as inspiring real acts of violence.

The concluding chapter considers the importance of authenticity for understanding subcultures and the rhetorics of popular music.

Chapter 1: New Authenticity

When looking at the development of black metal as a music subgenre, there is an important factor that needs to be discussed. While discussing the tumultuous and violent birth of the Norwegian black metal scene, there is an opening to observe the ways in which a subculture's members authenticate and construct their identity rhetorically. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of authenticity and its connections to music subculture and their formation. I will begin with developing an operating framework in which to discuss authenticity while also attempting to define this term. This also includes an analysis of how we 'authenticate' ourselves. In this chapter, I examine the way authenticity has been defined by other scholars, specifically in terms of music discourse. Following this, I develop a means for exploring authenticity in music by incorporating rhetorical and musicological perspectives.

Defining Authenticity

Authenticity is a prominent theme in most cultures, especially in the modern era. Charles Taylor (1992) asserts that we currently live under a "culture of authenticity" which has been formulated on this liberal notion of how to live that good life (16- 17). We tend to operate in a world where we expect most people to be honest and accurately themselves, to be authentic or perform authentic work. This notion is particularly important within communities built around shared qualities or interests. If someone, for example, is part of our weekly Dungeons and Dragons group, we may well operate under

the assumption that they genuinely enjoy playing Dungeons and Dragons. Of course, this is something more than simply having an innate authenticity, right?

Since authenticity is culturally important, it is also often a topic of scrutiny and discussion. As Richard Peterson (2005) writes, “Issues of authenticity most often come into play when authenticity has been put in doubt” (1083). Oftentimes, this occurs without ever defining what authenticity truly means. Instead, authenticity acts more as a polemical claim or challenge, something or someone claims or critiques from the outside, instead of being something self-evident. For many scholars, authenticity is socially and culturally manifested and ascribed onto the subjects brought into question rather than some innate quality of the person or institution under scrutiny. In this way, authenticity is a quality attributed to someone or something based on perception and, so much of the scholarly attention to authenticity has focused on performance and perception. In the following section, I briefly outline some of the key theoretical engagements with the idea of authenticity before turning to work looking specifically at authenticity and music.

Theoretical Grounding

When discussing authenticity, it is important to discuss the theoretical frameworks that exist to formulate our own operating definition. For most of us, authenticity is something real as it has been reinforced that it is a way of being and to be ‘oneself.’ However, this begs the question of where does this feeling come from? Handler (1986) concludes that the current conception of authenticity is heavily based on the individual. This primarily comes out of the Western world and its notions of individualism (1-2). Peterson and Moore agree and pursue projects that explore the

historical origins of this individualistic conception of authenticity. As Moore (2002) writes, "'Authenticity' is a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural and, thus, historicized position" (210). We can see the earliest formation of authenticity as a cultural product takes place in Antiquity and during the early periods of Christianity. In his observations, Michel Foucault (1988) brings in the term, *Epimelēsthai sautou*, to know yourself, and how it evolves through the age of Antiquity through the rise of Christianity and eventually into the later secularism (17). During Antiquity, this process of "knowing yourself" was seen as extremely important to Greco-Roman society, as it often was enacted via active participation. Often this participation is *performed* through activities such as being active in politics within the city-state. As Moore (2002) quotes Sarah Rubidge, "'authenticity is . . . not a property of, but something we ascribe to a performance' (Rubidge 1996, p. 219)" (210). Rather than "knowing yourself" being inscribed upon a subject, it is instead an ascription based on the subject's performances. I am contending that there is a noticeable cultural or societal demand of the individual to truly 'know yourself' which is accomplished via performances that the dominant culture, and its historicized position creates.

As time progressed into the medieval period, we can see another change to authenticity's historicized position. As cultural dominance shifts from Antiquity to Medieval, Christianity becomes the dominant force in governing behavior in how to live the 'good life.' Foucault (1988) points out that Christianity imposes a new set of stricter obligations on how to perform, as it goes beyond the preservation of a city-state over preservation of the soul. This is an important shift as we can see centralized control taking hold over how authenticity is to be interpreted and ascribed. In fact, Peterson

(2005) takes note of authenticity's emergence in the medieval era moving from its role as purely personal performance, but we can it was also related as a measure to judge "medieval era disputes, seizures, and thefts, of relics, bones or objects reputed to be associated with holy men of the Christian church" (1083). Authenticity's reach and limits have been reshaped as its historicized position shifts and is molded. Going from how to conduct oneself in the here and now, into judgments of divinity and the afterlife. However, there is no other time that created a more radical change to authenticity than the Industrial Age and the introduction of modernism.

This shift to mass production led to a shift in who holds the power to judge what is authentic based largely on the capitalist mode of production. In late capitalism, the performance of authenticity is often framed in relation to products and institutional practices. In order to better fabricate a sense of authenticity for mass produced products, many producers and capitalists created the field of marketing that exists today (Peterson, 2005; Moore, 2002). Marketing's sole purpose in its earliest stages was to find a way to make these new products unique for the consumer. The power, however, although in the hands of the capitalist class, also shifts more into the power of individual consumers, which began to influence how this new market creates and wheels out its respective products. Charles Taylor (1992) asserts that we have shifted into a "culture of authenticity" based upon a radical clamoring for being perceived as being authentic and the expectation that individuals will use work, products, and consumption as key means to performance authenticity.

As the dominant discourse shifts it becomes a question if you and those around you are authentic, is my product authentic, and how to appear so. By entering this new

modern age, there appears to be cracks in the system that makes the decisions on how to 'live the good life' and be 'authentic.' With the arrival of capitalism, there is an ever-increasing number of products that are constantly being replicated and copied, bought, and sold. This is where we find ourselves today, and these cracks in the system have affected us no place more than in the music industry.

Authenticity and Music

In this section, I will begin the discussion of authenticity and its relation to music and the discourse surrounding it. This will include heavy influences of research surrounding subculture and fandom. Fortunately, this is due to the growth of fan and music studies which provides a solid foundation for thinking not only about fan behaviors and attitudes but also about the implications the role of authenticity might have for musicians, labels, and fandoms.

'Act of Listening'

When discussing authenticity, it is important to consider how we are approaching it. For my work, and in the work of others, it has been asserted that we should deploy our ears. For context, we now know that authenticity is something that is ascribed onto a subject and their performances, rather than being an observable entity. So, for this thesis, while it is important to address *what* is being authenticated (music, activities, etc.) it is even more important to address *who* is being authenticated (Moore, 2002). Especially in the context of music and sound, it should be more of a concern of what we hear, rather than see. This is due to the nature of music and sound.

I begin by considering the nature of sound and music. According to Byron Hawk (2018), while sound is something that emerges through movements and creates a material encounter; music is a result of the organization of sound by pitch or rhythm. This is of course, the more materialist explanation of what we mean by sound and music. By using this definition, we also leave out the important inclusion of how sound and music serve us, just like authenticity, which is as cultural objects. On the other hand, Gunn et al. (2013) contend that viewing sound as a *cultural* object of study versus the material object of study need not be mutually exclusive. As both sides of the argument share a concern for sound as an object of study outside the concerns of language. This marriage of via points around sound and music first need to be married together by the act of listening.

Another portion of my advocacy for the act of listening is its importance for my place as a rhetorical scholar and critic. Music and authenticity are cultural objects that originate and are placed within the cultural norms of their times. So, while these cultural objects and people can be observed and critiqued, there is a caveat when it comes to music. There are limitations to gauging authenticity and studying music, so it is our duty as critics to adjust accordingly to activate our power of listening. As Scott & Edgar (2021) write, “We call for critics to situate ourselves as particularly placed listeners and to acknowledge our privilege as systemically authorized critics" (226). By recognizing our cultural-historical position as scholars we must abide by the act of listening to those being authenticated. In the following section I will introduce various aspects and concepts concerning the intersections of authenticity and music.

‘Aspects and Concepts’

Of course, there needs to be a conversation about the various aspects that exist as intersections between work concerning authenticity and music. I will also be including a discussion on subcultural and fandom studies in this section. I conclude this section by segueing into a discussion about how these appear in different music genres.

As mentioned in the previous section, I will be emphasizing the use of listening in my work, while at the same time observing who we are listening to. My approach to these questions is largely based on a variety of rhetorical and musicology scholars, those who examine the cultural and historical aspects of authenticity in music (Moore, 2002; Edgar & Scott 2021). Similar questions have also been asked in Fan Studies, as Vist et al., (2021) asserts that often our best work is the work that we put ourselves into. In this section, I seek to position my current project in relation to these fields of study.

‘Who are you? Bordering and Identity’

Firstly, I feel the need to address the important function that identity plays in respect to authenticity and its connections with music. In Paul Hodkinson (2002) work on Goth subculture, he provides a criterion for exploring authenticity within subcultures, which includes: (1) consistent distinctiveness, (2) shared identity, and (3) commitment (30). Similarly, Moore (2002), argues that authenticity is defined by: (1) artists speak the truth of their own situation; (2) that they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and (3) that they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (present) others.

Drawing from Moore (2002), rather than asking what is being authenticated, it is better if we ask who. By doing this it helps narrow our focus on specific subjects and opens the space to look at how we perform authenticity. Of course, there are a variety of ways we can address the intersections of authenticity and identity. Peterson (2005) contends that authenticity is primarily concerned with group identity and, therefore, can be thought of as elastic. This idea is established on a balancing act between being a part of an ascribed group, while also maintaining a sense of personal integrity and uniqueness.

The elasticity of authenticity can be seen in more contemporary contexts as well such as the UK singer, Adele. In their work, Amanda Nell Edgar (2014) addresses Adele's sweep of the 2012 Grammy Awards and the racial discourse concerning Adele's voice, "sounding black." Edgar adds an important new layer called added layer termed "bordering," as it is based upon the borders created by a white dominated music industry. Of course, these discursive borders were created to control bodies in the entertainment industry, especially black and brown ones. The way this shows up for Edgar (2014) is through voice. Edgar (2014) writes, "Vocal racial passing, in which a singer identified with one race performs a vocal sound identified with another race, represents a racially conflicted performance" (169). This is also developed over a long period of time as certain music genres came from Black culture throughout the United States. Peterson (2005) and Edgar (2014) also discuss this bordering and colonization of popular music genres of jazz and blues by the white led music industry, to capitalize on their popularity.

Circling back to the question of the artist and who they are, we see further this analyzed and explored by Edgar, who offers a criterion for looking at Adele's "black sound" being vocal discontinuities, and vocal strain (173). By using our ability to listen we can better analyze, beyond simple lyrical analysis, how an artist exists within the realm of authenticity. However, the challenge to Adele's authenticity would be how she fits into Moore's criteria for artists. Edgar (2014) addresses this as Adele's ability to pass between being a white female pop performance and use of Black voice comes to the foreground concerning her and other artist's authenticity (177). While some appeared to claim that Adele was singing her true feelings, it is the contradiction created by her voice that should be concerning. As Edgar claims, "In the midst of this anti-race discourse, the music industry visually reasserted the entitlement of white performers to cross racial borders (177).

Before moving to a discussion of genre, I am going to address the importance of commitment and distinctiveness. Both Hodkinson and Moore suggest these are important qualities when looking at authenticity and subcultures. Which can in fact be seen in metal and punk subculture. Susanna Larsson (2013) gives insight into how those within heavy metal construct a sense of style and authenticity. Larsson (2013) observes the tension between the individual's effort to be their authentic self and their reliance on a community. She notes that the difficulty in researching authenticity in relation to subcultures lies, "first in seeing how the individual constructs herself as an authentic being in relation to the rest of society and social life, and second, how she uses social group belongingness to socially separate in-group cultural authenticity from an outside world" (97). This can most be seen in her interviews with Swedish metal fans and the

rules that have been created within the community.

Larsson (2013) writes, “The difference between the active thinking of the self and the active collective construction of heavy metal are the number of ‘musts’ that become implicit in social comparison (Taylor, 1992)” (102). She recounts a heavy metal fan explaining:

Erik: It’s one of those things about heavy metal ... you buy the package, it’s this thing where you buy the records, you dress like a heavy metal fan, you listen to heavy metal, you go to concerts, you drink beer, and you have fun. It’s not like you only put on a Motörhead T-shirt on Saturdays.

David: You’re being genuine.

In this discussion with the interviewees and Charles Taylor’s work, there is a discussion concerning the dedication and rules that one needs to abide by in order to appear “genuine.” One cannot simply leave Motörhead at the door. To identify yourself to other metalheads, one needs to wear the shirts, go to shows, etc. The importance of actions like this is by making yourself stand out, being distinct, you are signaling to others that you are genuine. Going back to Moore, you are confirming much like the artists, that you are speaking true to yourself, the situation, or the group that you are representing. Another example of this can be found in punk music, punk scholars such as Alastair Gordon, Phillip Lewin and James Patrick Williams suggest there are three tenets’ punks need to abide by besides simply going to shows and wearing attire. These tenets are rejection, reflexivity, and self-actualization all of which revolve around a state of being, against conformity with what could be considered mainstream culture and capitalism (Gordon, 2014; Vannini et al., 2020)

‘Selling Out’

It is important to mention this final aspect and concept when discussing authenticity and its ties to the music industry. I also assert this is an issue in other alternative subcultures as well, that being the idea of ‘selling out.’ Entering the discussion of finding authenticity in a world surrounded by mass production of copies, it is important for many to try and find that unique product. Something that you know to be ‘true’ to itself, the situation, or the group it represents. This occurs in no place other than under the neoliberal, capitalist mode of production as we try to reason our way to authenticity despite the culture of mass production (Bridson et al., 2017). Ultimately, this calls onto the music industry as well as music becoming a new commodity to be mass produced.

I argue that this mainly comes to the foreground during the introduction of neoliberalism. The entrance of neoliberalism into this discussion of authenticity also occurs around the same time that many music subcultures began to grow in size. As Patterson (2013) and Christe (2003) state, metal and punk arrived in the mid-to late 1970s with acts such as Led Zeppelin, The Clash, and Black Sabbath. All of this occurs during the period in UK politics known as ‘Thatcherism’ which was the introduction of neoliberal economics and politics into the UK eventually leading to severe economic downturn post-WW2.

In this neoliberal paradigm, it is asserted that the individual’s sense of agency should reflect the ideals and rationality of the market; to sell yourself as a marketable

entity, a commodity. Gershon (2011) contends that this arrival of Neoliberalism has shifted us away from the classic liberal conception of the individual owning themself as property, over to this idea that the individual rather than being property is more of a business (539). By selling oneself as a business, you are attempting to maximize the ability to get a job, work efficiently, and generate wealth. Fundamentally however, this has led to not only the loss of authenticity in preference for marketability, but also contradicts values such as morality, truth, and uniqueness (Bridson et al., 2017). This is because in order to appeal to marketability, you are never truly in the moment, you are rather constantly consuming and steering yourself through alliances and interactions based upon what the other will give you (Gershon, 2011).

This is important for the concept of selling out as it is an ascription of a loss of authenticity typically onto music artists. Keeble (2016), looked at American punk in the late 1990s and found an intensity in the anxieties that surround being thought of as a 'sell out.' This ascription is also particularly damaging outside of music as well. In Siemens et al. (2020), there was a clear distaste found among consumers for brands perceived as '" selling out" or making too much effort to achieve widespread success. This is because as bands, artists, and other products grow larger they are perceived as losing their "realness," truth, sincerity, and more because it is contradictory to the demands of marketability and growth.

Selling out can become a serious indictment for popular bands, especially metal bands. There was an intense period of backlash with the arrival of Metallica's self-titled

record, also known as *The Black Album*, and its mainstream success (Hagar, 2016). Many thrash metal, or more general metal fans began to debate Metallica's success and if they were sellouts. As McLeod (1999) suggests, when an artist becomes "commercial," there is a distance created politically and economically with the fans, the artist, and their perceived personas.

Genres

In this third part, I am going to discuss work on authenticity across various genres of music. Especially as each has their own work and nuances attached to each, along with many similarities. This will assist as well in demonstrating how the various aspects and concepts appear in these different music genres.

Punk

A significant genre of music and subculture that has been studied in terms of subculture and authenticity is punk. Predominantly addressed by Hebdige (1979) who asserts a more Marxist position by looking through the ways in which hegemony reacts to the existence of subcultures. Specifically, Hebdige (1979) notes that as subcultures are forming and becoming popular, mainstream culture attempts to consume them thereby removing their sense of style and authenticity. His primary example was punk music, specifically from the UK, finding the ways in which it shifted and changed over time due to it becoming more popular.

We can see this reflected in the anxieties that exist within the punk subculture.

As mentioned, Keeble (2016) through their analysis of Blake Schwarzenbach and the band Jawbreaker in the 1990s. Jawbreaker released their final album, *Dear You* (1995), with Geffen records where one of their many pressures was the threat of being labeled as 'sell outs.' As McLeod (1999) suggests, this is due to moving on to larger labels and commercialization can lead to an alienation from the fans due to the appearance of losing their "true selves."

This is predominantly embodied because of punk's doctrine and main tenets that it created. Lewin & Williams (2009) contend that there are three main tenets to consider: "rejection," "reflexivity" and "self-actualization." By enacting these tenets, you are resisting the dominant mainstream culture of mass production. Lewin & Williams (2009) write, "Punks committed to it by enacting their subjectively realized belief systems through praxis in everyday life" they continue, "Drawing a sharp distinction between being and doing, they expressed disdain for people who engaged in artificial performances in order to earn social approval" (73). By doing this you set yourself outside of the acceptable culture making yourself "punk."

Goth

Hodkinson (2002) explored Goth subculture and found that rather than being subsumed and commercialized, much Goth culture has not significantly changed over the decades. This consistency and uniformity give it the aura of authenticity and it is precisely because Goth culture has not been consumed by capital and commodification. At the heart of this tension between hegemonic consumption and subcultural defiance is the struggle of individuals and subcultures to retain consistent control and ownership

over their subculture, its language and aesthetics.

Agnes Jasper (2004) does significant work on authenticity in the Goth subculture in Holland (95). This work focuses on the Dutch Goth scene, as well as performing a variety of different studies. Primarily this is made up of interviews, images, and artifacts from this scene to help construct its image. Jasper (2004) concludes that, "Notions of authenticity within Dutch gothic subculture are positively affirmed when they are ineffable and ungraspable" (106). Existing within this amorphous space, the Dutch gothic subculture exhibits a lot of the aspects we see with authenticity and its ascription. However, there is a sense of ambiguity and fanatical doctrine when people are asked what it means to be "Goth."

Metal

This thesis of course, will be contributing to a multitude of work done on heavy metal music and authenticity. Growing scholarly interest in metal fan culture has led to the emergence of metal studies. As Brown (2018) notes, there was a shift in subcultural studies position concerning heavy metal music which led to the emergence of metal music studies as a field (344). In cohesion with previously mentioned work, I will be doing a deeper study into how authenticity is constructed within Norwegian black metal; however, I want to address other works that look at authenticity and metal music.

To address the aspect of shared identity and commitment, there is an important aspect of metal that needs to be recognized. Kahn-Harris (2019) asserts that within

heavy metal, there exists a ‘metal identity triad’ that is based on the construction of white, heteronormative masculinity. This is not an attempt to say that heavy metal is an inherently white music genre, but to address the racial bordering that has been created by the music industry and social relations that it influences. Like Edgar and Holladay’s analysis of country music and whiteness, there is also an emphasis on precarity and shared experiences within heavy metal, which tends to cover the overall arching identity triad.

There is a work that addresses the identity triad by Nikolas Sellheim, who does a lyrical analysis on how a Northern or ‘Nordic’ identity has been created through black and Viking metal music over a period. Their work contains a range of different bands from Led Zeppelin to Bathory to Amon Amarth. Sellheim (2019) primarily looks at how the image of the ‘Northmen’ is constructed via lyrical analysis and how this has resulted in the inspiration of real-world violence. I bring this into the discussion as it supports other research that has been done on authenticity and whiteness in black metal.

To build on the ties of ‘Nordicness’ in black metal and authenticity, we need to branch out a little further. Whiting & Hoad (2017) do this via contextual and discourse analysis on the ‘Nordic’ extreme metal scene and how the concepts of ‘Nordicness’ hold up to the via of Scandinavia as a liberal democracy. Whiting & Hoad (2017) primarily contend that “In arguing for multiple understandings of “Nordicness” in metal, we contend that the cultural capital that accompanies the “Nordic” emerges as a series of fragmented, often conflicting categories”. Looking through their work, they go into these

many fragments of how “Nordicness” is discussed and framed by those in the extreme metal scene and those on the outside.

Often when there has been research conducted on black metal music, it has been more from the position of studying how whiteness and identity operate in the musical subculture. However, there is a shift in scholarship on black metal that has emerged called Black Metal Theory. Black Metal Theory tries to act as a more ‘speculative and creative endeavor’ and often rejects music studies, ethnography and other forms of research (Helvete, n.d.). As an example, Bujalka conducts research on how authenticity and Satanic politics operates through a Bataillean lens. Bujalka (2018) contends that, “In any discussion of Black Metal Theory, it would be careless to suppose that black metal is merely a case study through which to read theory, and it is certainly worth noting the appropriation and exploration of Bataille’s theory within black metal itself” (519-520). Paralleling black metal music’s nihilistic rejection of established values, Black Metal Theory is a radical form of anti-theory as it seeks to reject a lot of common notions found in research being done on popular music and subculture. Although this radical approach would be interesting to take up, it is a little advanced for my thesis. This inclusion of Black Metal Theory is primarily to see the present state of research that is being done with or on black metal music.

Theatricality and Authenticity

Another very important concept to include into the discussion of authenticity, especially as it pertains to the musical and media performances of black metal acts is the

phrase, *theatricality*. In my case, this can also be referred to as a more theatrical authenticity, as the artists portray an image of themselves or others for the audience. While this is not the main focus of research, this discussion of theatricality and how it affects my understanding of the subjects' performances.

According to various scholars, theatricality acts not only as a practice, but also as a theoretical concept that is often experienced through it being acted out by performers (Quick & Rushton, 2019; Petrović-Lotina, 2019; Weltman, 2018). However, the phrase itself has been historically negatively defined as, "the quality of being exaggerated and excessively dramatic" (Weltman, p. 913, 2018). While this is mainly due to the perceived monolithic opposition to what we call theatricality, as something that is not authentic, it goes deeper than that. Looking at both Peterson (2005) and Moore (2002), often what gains artists their ascription as authentic, is purely based upon their perception as they play into the socio-cultural conditions to be perceived as authentic. However, according to Janelle Reinelt (2002), there is a significant shift between the terms theatricality and performativity, both containing fluid meanings. While performativity requires the physical engagement of the body, theatricality points to the texts or performances themselves gesturing to their own conditions or metatheatrical effects. Reineilt (2002) writes, "This theatricality is an experience, then, that is not limited to the theater, but, is an aspect of life that appears whenever its minimum conditions are met" (p. 207). Theatricality itself, in this sense invites the spectator into the event to participate with the act of the other, where the ultimate initiative to engage with this is the spectator.

According to Weltman (2018), theatricality itself emerges not only just in theatrical performances, however, also in prose especially within the Victorian period. In theater and prose, there exists the invitational pull and reality that appears exaggerated to the audience. In terms of this project, theatricality especially in musical performance and in terms of appearance within the forms of media (fanzines, magazines, etc.) is a large portion of the authentic work that black metal artists, or metal artists as a whole have engaged in for a long amount of time.

This will be observed and analyzed further in this chapter, as well as the following chapters as there is a discussion of theatrics, authenticity, and music. In the following section, I will dive into a brief genealogy of metal that explores the various sonic and presentational stages that genre went through.

A Genealogy of Black Metal

An important part of this research is based on the history and origins of the Norwegian black metal scene. This section offers a genealogical history of the scene to help give context and create a sense of key events and figures. I find it particularly important as well as much of this acts as a founding mythology for the scene that continues to shape it.

My review of literature is organized in three sections: A brief history of heavy metal and its subgenres, an introduction to the first wave of black metal, and finally the introduction and history of the second wave of black metal. By providing this context, it

will help create a broader understanding of how this history affects the developments that I seek to analyze.

'Into the Void'

Many of the historical sources that discuss black metal's emergence go back to the very beginning of heavy metal music as a genre. Patterson (2013), Christe (2003), and Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) all base the emergence of black metal on the ways that evil and darkness was used and constructed in the early days of heavy metal. Arguably it all began with Black Sabbath whose self-titled album that was released on Friday the 13th, in February of 1970 (Patterson, 2013, p. 1). The album itself starts with the track also self-titled, beginning with the sound of eerie church bells and the patting of the rain. Following this ambient lead, it is topped by G chord progression based on the 'The Devil's Interval' and this opening suggests the malevolent and theatrical tone that would define the genre.

However, it is not simply the use of a chord named after the Devil that defines this genre of music. It is also the heavy influence of the occult, Satanism, and black magic at the outset of this new form of music. Of course, Black Sabbath did not make their name out of thin air! Patterson (2013) relies on a story told about the bassist Geezer Butler where he witnessed a crowd standing in line for the Boris Karloff film, *Black Sabbath*, which sparked the idea that something scary is the way to make money. Coupling this with Butler's own admissions of researching topics like Satanism, Crowley, and black magic, the band was born.

Black Sabbath was not alone in marketing themselves on themes of Satanism and

darkness. Bands such as Led Zeppelin and its members are also rumored to have dabbled in the esoteric and dark world of magic. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) write that it is alleged that Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin often went to great lengths to collect and learn about figures like Aleister Crowley, going to the point of purchasing Crowley's former estate, Boleskine (p. 3). These early moments established "evil" and "Satanic" influences as keys to creating an image of heavier bands that could catch people's imaginations.

Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin were not along in engaging in dark and Satanic imagery in the early 1970s. Black Widow and Coven both developed a cult following based on their use of themes of evil and Satanism. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) argue that Coven's antics created a more mysterious and cult-like image as they claim to have conducted the "first Black Mass to be recorded" and included it in their 1970 album, *Witchcraft*. Numerous bands followed the trend towards horrific and Satanic imagery in the 1970s, including chart topping acts like Alice Cooper and Kiss. The trend of heavy rock music combined with Satanic and evil imagery was firmly established in global popular culture.

'Children of the Grave': The New Breed of Metal

Leaving the 1970s metal began to evolve as it fused with the new blood being raised on bands like Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, and Jimi Hendrix. These younger bands would be the ones to push metal's boundaries alongside the previous generation as they not only pick up speed, but also the axe!

Heavy metal hit the ground running as it gained increased popularity and became global during the mid-1970s into the early part of the 1980s. One of the most significant events that defined this is called the “New Wave of British Heavy Metal.” (NWOBH)This period is defined by the severe economic downturn that was occurring in Great Britain, as unemployment and inflation reached record highs (Christe, 2003, p. 30). However, there is nothing more that defined this period than the birth of punk. Christe (2003) writes, “Blighted by the worst conditions since World War II, the kingdom needed creative forces of all kinds,” he continues, “From punk came a catalyzing spark: the audacity to believe that anyone could start a rock band” (p. 30). The success of rising punk acts and bands like Black Sabbath, inspired by Judas Priest and Motörhead, who combined the reckless energy of punk with the dark imagery of Sabbath. Often this fusion of punk and heavy metal is what is forgotten, especially when discussing the rise of metal’s many subgenres. Christe (2003) and Patterson (2003) both conclude that during this new wave, Judas Priest led the charge in not only picking up the tempo, but also the classic black leather and sex appeal. At the same time, Motörhead began integrating metal and punk styles. Patterson (2003) contends that Motörhead, “would also have a huge impact on the genre, introducing a fast paced, rough-and-ready approach that would pave the way for many of metal’s more aggressive acts” (p. 4-5). It is this fusion of punk and heavy metal out of the UK that boosts metal into becoming more of a global phenomenon. As well as inspiring the future subgenres to come.

The rising popularity of metal music combined with its continued fascination with Satanism and evil exacerbated a growing public concern about the music’s impact on the young. The “Satanic Panic” of the 1980s led to widespread outcry against metal from

religious and parents' organizations as well as increasing calls by the US government to regulate access. These concerns helped lead to the Parent Music Resource Center and the labeling of albums as potentially offensive (Hughes, 2020).

The two important subgenres that emerged were glam and thrash metal. Metal during the period developed a new sense of tempo and flashy aesthetics that would transcend the days of Black Sabbath. Glam, built in the image of flamboyant bands like KISS, dominated the rock music charts in the late 1980s with bands like Poison, Ratt, and Motley Crüe gaining wide followings with colorful spandex outfits and catchy hooks. On the other end of the spectrum other bands would eschew flamboyant uniforms in favor of darker and heavier riffs. Slayer formed in 1981 and became a pioneer of what would become known as thrash metal. The defining factor of thrash, however, is the need for speed. In what could be considered their Magnum Opus, Metallica's 1986 album, *Master of Puppets*, debuted. Christe (2003) writes, "Expanding the grand plans of Black Sabbath with blinding flashes of lightning and subaquatic detonations, Metallica was so fast it seemed to be happening several places at once" (144). With the arrival of thrash, it indeed seemed as if the metal world was about to explode.

In the streets of Los Angeles, there was a clear tension between these two subgenres. To describe the dichotomy between thrash and glam, Christe (2003) interviewed Michael Sweet of Stryper:

> You had the bands like Metallica that just go out in a t-shirt and jeans and play loud, heavy, tight, tight, hard rock. And then you had the glam thing going that started to take off, with the big hair and the makeup and the shiny clothes. Not to be mean, but those guys weren't masters of their instruments. It was more of a show. (156)

From this point, metal was defined by the battles that took place between the strong and fast thrash scene versus the party and glamor of glam metal. However, as the thrash and glam bands gained popularity, bands like Metallica and Anthrax began to clean up their sounds. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) writes, "Like any style hyped incessantly by the music industry, Thrash Metal's days were ultimately numbered," (p. 26) The bands of old became too big and too popular leaving the homes of the underground. And like any popular band, the record labels scrambled to have their own Metallica. Leaving the light of Los Angeles, over in the corners of Europe; there is something much darker brewing.

"Welcome Princes of Hell": Black Metal's First Wave

Now that our very brief history of metal has been established, it is important that we arrive at the metaphorical black sheep of the entire heavy metal genre, black metal. To give perspective, in the late 1970s and 1980s, metal fans began to hear the rumblings of metal in countries further from the metal core of Great Britain and the United States. In the region of Scandinavia, the early formations of what would become black metal began. Arguably, however, the roots of black metal began in Great Britain with the band, Venom, who formed in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1978. Although emerging at a similar time as the other bands of NWOBHM, Venom stood out from the crowd. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) contend, "Venom took the heaviness and dark mysticism of these progenitors and gave their own youth punch-in-the-face to bring it up-to-date," they continue, "as by this time the original Metal bands had settled into lavish lifestyles resulting from their success losing

most of the rawness that had once made them exciting" (p. 10). Much like Motörhead, Venom was fusing the early bluesiness of early rock and metal with the fast, aggressive crunch of early punk music. As their music developed, the influence of demons and the macabre began to take over Venom's image. Much like Black Sabbath, Venom is known for its choices to shock audiences. The way they did this was by members of the band taking up pseudonyms based on demons and astrology, followed by writing lyrics about the devil, killer countesses, and ultimately the arrival of black metal. This was however, primarily for shock and performance, rather than actual belief.

While Venom was a precursor of the black metal movement, its most significant early bands were Bathory and Mercyful Fate, from Sweden and Denmark, respectively. Besides being from Scandinavian these two bands also both played a significant role in the formulation of black metal's image, "politics" and sound. Denmark's Mercyful Fate began as a five-piece bands that would challenge the conventional tempo, rhythm, and timing by having more progressive and strange time signatures. Led by their vocalist King Diamond, the band began to incorporate more occult and Satanic lyrics and imagery in albums like *Don't Break the Oath*. Diamond is also well known for sporting more gothic attire and white-and-black face paint ordained by upside down crosses and sharp wings (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003p. 14-16). For Mercyful Fate, the image of Satan and demons became a more serious one compared to Venom who mainly did it for shock value. Regretfully, after the release of *Don't Break the Oath* in 1984, King Diamond would depart to form his own self-titled side project before returning to Mercyful Fate in 1992 (Patterson, 2013, p. 23-24). On the other side of the Baltic Sea, Bathory formed in

Sweden in 1983. They are the most prominent band to be in the first wave of black metal, and many argue they created the blueprint for the new sound. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) write,

> Though not conscious of its influence, Bathory managed to create the blueprint for Scandinavian Black Metal in all its myriad facts: from frenzied cacophony to orchestrated, melodic bombast; reveling in the excesses of medieval Devil worship to thoughtful explorations of ancient Viking heathenism; drawing inspiration from European traditions to deliberately flirting with the iconography of fascism and National Socialism. (21)

The sounds, aesthetics, and mystery that surrounds the first wave of black metal becomes the hallmark for the scene. We can trace this entire lineage of black metal through this immense history of rock, metal, and punk music. Often with these bands and subgenres being interconnected through vast networks of sound and style. Sadly, much like the thrash bands, the scene began to become larger resulting in many signing to major labels and losing their sense of 'evil.'

"Towards the Pantheon": The Second Wave

While bands like Venom, Bathory, and Mercyful Fate laid the foundation for this new, darker subgenre, the first wave of black metal soon began to lose popularity. The new bands following the style were often seen as less committed to the darker themes and more interested in commercializing the fan base's interest in dark themes and aggressive sounds. Although still transgressive, the scene became a staller version of its former self.

Out of this lull the band called Mayhem appeared and the second wave of black metal would begin.

Christe (2003) observes the emergence of this second wave, “In the 1990s, this wave of bands imported the crude beginnings of 1980s black metal forefathers–Venom, Hellhammer, and Bathory–to capture their own evocative wash of night skies, natural wonder, and Nordic myths” (p. 270). This new ‘second wave’ of black metal was largely spawned from the mind of Øystein Aarseth, more commonly known by his stage name, Euronymous. Aarseth can be considered the primary mind behind this scene as he was the one who often set the goals and vision of the scene. Christe (2003) quotes Emperor’s bassist, Mortiis, “Without Euronymous black metal would not be the same. Back then you did not have fifty thousand black metal albums out; you only had, like fifteen” he continues, “It was different. Euronymous had this total Satan attitude. I didn’t have that–he had that. He was such a devil worshiper you wouldn’t believe it” (p. 270) It was this serious dedication that could be seen to define the scene and its ideological motives. For Euronymous, black metal was something evil and needed to combat things like mainstream music and Christianity (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003, p. 64-65).

To advance his message, Euronymous was known for manipulating the truth and media around certain events. One of the most notable stories of this is the suicide of Mayhem’s vocalist, Per Yngve “Dead” Ohlin who joined the band in 1988. Dead was from Sweden and had been involved in the early formations of the Swedish death metal scene with bands like Morbid and Enslaved. After speaking to metal zine writer, Metallion, Dead decided to travel to Norway to be a part of Mayhem. Upon his arrival,

Patterson (2013) notes that although Dead was known for his impressive vocals, morbid behavior, and a sense of fanaticism; it was ultimately shrouded by his chronic depression, introversion, and general melancholic attitude towards life (p. 141). This ultimately became a part of the act that Mayhem sought to perform. During these shows, Dead would commit acts of self-harm on stage, throw blood at the crowd, as well as bringing dead animals to decorate the stage (Patterson, 2013, p. 144). It should be noted that this eccentric behavior was also done off stage and in the studio.

Sadly, many of the wild antics that were occurring with Dead, and the band came to a boiling point in April 1991. Patterson (2013) writes, “Increasingly isolated from the world, Dead committed suicide on April 8, 1991, first slitting his wrists and wandering around the house before shooting himself in the head with a shotgun Euronymous himself owned” (p. 146). The preceding events are catalogued within the origin myth of Norwegian black metal. Upon discovering the body, Euronymous decided to delay calling the proper authorities in order to find a camera to take photos of the corpse. As Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) write, “As many will testify, however, Aarseth appeared to feel little sorrow over the loss of Dead, instead glorifying his violent departure in order to cultivate a further mystique of catastrophe surrounding the band” (p. 59). From this tragic moment, Euronymous saw the ability to manipulate the media in order to spread “evil” to the masses.

What eventually erupted within the scene were calls to ramp up acts of violence not only against the self, but others. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) quote Euronymous: “We have declared WAR. Dead died because the trend people have destroyed

everything from the old black/dead metal scene Today ‘death’ metal is something normal, accepted, and FUNNY (argh) and we HATE it. It used to be spikes, chains, leather, and black clothes, and this was the only thing Dead lived for as he hated this world and everything which lives on it” (p. 60).

This increased frustration began to boil and lash out at new forces however, especially with the introduction of Varg Vikernes to the scene. For the purpose of this genealogy and our sanity, we cannot possibly cover every alleged and proven crime that Vikernes is implicated in. However, his relationship to the scene can be characterized as a Zippo to the dry brush that caused a firestorm across Norway.

As the black metal scene grew larger, especially after the death of Dead, much of the discourse within the scene promoted violence. Moynihan & Søderlind (2003) note that Euronymous and Vikernes would routinely write their opinions to the fanzines and in interviews. The Christian establishment of Norway was often portrayed as the enemy. This escalating Satanic and violent discourse eventually reached its peak as in June 1992 with the burning of the first stave church in Norway. Spanning from 1992-1995, a series of church burnings and vandalism brought increased media attention to black metal. Over this period, Varg and Euronymous both would proceed to use Norwegian and Metal media to promote their war against Christianity and the mainstream (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003, p. 100-101). This violent escalation had the effect of attracting the attention of Norwegian authorities who began targeting fans of black metal. However, with this added pressure, the contest between Euronymous and Varg began to heat up as well.

Often it was a matter of who was more radical than the other. During August 1993, Euronymous was assisting Varg's solo project, Burzum, recording its first CD, *Aske*, their rivalry finally reached a breaking point. On August 10, 1993, Øystein Aarseth, was found stabbed twenty-three times to death in his apartment stairwell (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003, p. 129-136). Although originally thought to have been killed by members of the Swedish black metal scene, it was found that Varg Vikernes had murdered Aarseth. Murder mixed with the various church burnings throughout the country solidified Norwegian black metal's status in metal culture.

Methodology

This section is going to lay out my effort to provide a holistic, sonic inclusive rhetorical analysis of my object of study. My goal in this thesis is to discuss how authenticity has been rhetorically constructed within black metal's first and second wave. My two main two main focuses will be addressing the cultural products surrounding this band and the selected records, typically in the form of fan zines. The second of which is the sonic aspects of the band and selected records by deconstructing a few songs' musical components, as well as lyrical. While my main objective is to provide a rhetorical critique based upon sound studies, a primary area of my sources will be pulled from areas of musicology and subcultural studies.

Sound Studies and Music

In this section I am going to open with a brief discussion of what I mean by

sound, music and how it functions rhetorically. This is currently an emerging subfield of study within rhetorical studies which gives me a broad horizon to work with. I will primarily be pulling from figures such as Joshua Gunn, Justin Eckstein, and Byron Hawk. While these are the primary sound studies scholars from rhetorical studies, I will also be reaching towards musicology to help provide my model of analysis; specifically, how to analyze popular music.

Currently, the field of rhetoric has primarily observed and studied language and other forms of media. However, there has been a lack of study into the dimensions of music and sound. Therefore, Gunn et al. (2013), suggests that there be an inquiry into sonic studies considering its ubiquity and use within our environment. As Gunn et al. (2013) contend, “Almost any rhetorical artifact that has a sonic element can be ‘read’ with greater depth and clarity if we think with our ears" (p. 488). This is supported by other scholars such as Justin Eckstein who sought to differentiate between the study of sound as a matter of materiality versus that of sound as a cultural object. The ability to fuse the two ways of analyzing sound is important as that is how one can achieve a more holistic view of how sound functions within their object of study.

Another key factor for analyzing popular music within sound studies and rhetoric, is the concept of soundscapes. Primarily pulling from Birdsall (2012) who discusses the creation of soundscapes in Nazi Germany as a means of social control, the idea that we use sound as a method of communication via our ability to feel and hear is compelling. On top of this, prior research has been done on music and identification via the creation of soundscapes, which includes previous work by rhetorical scholar, Kenneth Burke.

Both Hurley (2022) and Overall (2017), discuss the aspects of Kenneth Burke's work, sonic identification, and the creation of soundscapes to a lengthy degree. Hurley specifically deployed Burke's work as a methodology for analyzing funeral doom metal, and its sonic identity. This scholarly work helps establish precedent to where I can work from.

However, I will be using a more musicological bent to my work to assist in the streamlining of my thesis and subjects of analysis. This will be informed by authenticity and musicological scholars such as Phillip Tagg, Robert Walser, and Richard Peterson.

Tagg Model – 'Analyzing Popular Music'

To streamline my analysis, I need to apply a model that best addresses the matters of sound at a material level, which means things such as tempo, pitch, and tone, while on the other hand a way of addressing sound's more cultural components and impacts. This is primarily addressed by Phillip Tagg, who provides a hermeneutic-semiotic model to analyze the multiple layers that need to be addressed when discussing music. Although it comes from musicology, it fills in the gap of addressing the more material concerns in sound studies, as well as addressing music as a cultural product. As Tagg (2015) contends, "It is clear that a holistic approach to the analysis of popular music is the only viable one if the goal is to reach a full understanding of all factors interacting with the conception, transmission and reception of the object of study" (6). In my own work, I will be using this core model while integrating rhetorical perspectives on sound, visuals, marketing, and lyrics.

Fan Zines and Packaging

While sound and lyrics seem the natural purview of this analysis, exploring the marketing and discussion of these albums requires looking at other texts related to the albums themselves. Another important section of my work will be analyzing and including the voices of those involved in these music subcultures. Especially considering the DIY aspects of early metal music, especially in the second wave of black metal, it is important to address these cultural objects. In the works of Triggs (2006), the study of fan zines can offer the ability to study a whole different world of communication that can take place within a given subculture. Often tied to topics such as identity and music genre, fan zines are put together through personal and crowdfunding and are typically used as a means of getting out the message of bands, artists, and more. From a position of fan studies and alternative subculture, it is extremely important to address how the fans police and associate what is to be considered authentic or not, and one of those means has historically been through magazines (Wheaton & Beal, 2003). This use of fan zines also offers a way for my work to address the fans in other ways outside of an interviewing process such as the work of Susanna Larsson and Philip Lewin and J. Patrick Williams.

Lyrical Analysis

On top of the discussion of sonic qualities, I will also be addressing lyrical content from both selected records. My primary source is from Rafalovich and Schneider (2005) who discuss the role of metal music and its lyrics as an extension of youth culture politics. Ultimately, predominant themes that will be addressed look at topics of violence, nihilism, and Satanism or the Occult. I will demonstrate how these lyrics are used to convey authenticity, as well as the politics of each band's scenes.

In the following chapter, I will introduce my first subject, the band Mercyful Fate and their 1984 album, *Don't Break the Oath*. Here I will demonstrate this sonic and rhetorical analysis of the music and how this defined what is called, the first wave of black metal. Here we can see that the figure, King Diamond, engages in more theatrical performances of Satanism and occultism, reminiscent of earlier metal acts such as Coven, however, also pushes the envelope in terms of moral panic and sonic qualities. I assert that the importance of theatricality and melodrama is key to understanding the developments in how black metal acts display themselves to audiences and the media. While most refer to acts such as Venom, I argue that Mercyful Fate plays a much more significant role in this development which will be explored in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: ‘Don’t Break the Oath’

For this second chapter, I will be analyzing and discussing the band Mercyful Fate and their unique approach to constructing their form of authenticity, as well as how it fits within black metal more broadly. Mercyful Fate originated in Denmark and the band is led by their lead singer, King Diamond, who is well-known for his iconic appearance and shrill, ghastly voice. The band is considered one of the key bands for the first wave of black metal and released two albums in the 1980s before taking a hiatus until the 1990s when they released five more albums.

In some ways, Mercyful Fate deviates from other black metal bands. They sonically diverge significantly from what other black metal bands of their era like Venom and Bathory. Their music relies more on the virtuoso and melodic elements created by the band while including King Diamond's unique falsetto voice over top. Sonically, Mercyful Fate is closer in tone and production to bands like Judas Priest and Queensyrche. The reason Mercyful Fate is categorized as an authentic black metal band is their Satanic message, which is a key characteristic of black metal ideology. Led by King Diamond, an open LaVeyan Satanist, Mercyful Fate embraces darkness, demonology, and mystery through lyrics and on-stage performance.

The reason to start with Mercyful Fate and King Diamond is that they represent the first wave of black metal and originate out of Scandinavia. Although early black metal bands such as Bathory originate from Sweden, I have significant interest in how Mercyful Fate fits within the canon of black metal. While bands like Bathory were

known to live in more secrecy, never playing any live shows. Mercyful Fate and the English band Venom, both were not only popular live acts, but also managed a sense of secrecy and having a more simulated, theatrical experience. Venom's Cronos has done several interviews discussing how their appearance through fashion and song is primarily a constructed act. O'Neill (2017) writes, "At the time, Venom were not taken seriously," he continues, "But, much more importantly, Venom did not take themselves too seriously" (p. 92).

Unlike Venom, Mercyful Fate and more importantly, their lead singer King Diamond leans into their expressions of Satanism and occultism as genuine performances of belief and aesthetics rather than for marketability or simple fun. In short, while Mercyful Fate doesn't always clearly fit within black metal's musical style, they are deeply entrenched in the more ideological aspects of what it means to be black metal. Fundamentally, Mercyful Fate exhibits that in order to be black metal, you must be perceived as evil. Through their flamboyant lead singer, King Diamond, Mercyful Fate does this by using more theatrical techniques to show off his, and the band's authenticity. From make-up to microphone stand made of bones, King Diamond revels in horror-based, theatrical elements. However, in spite of the theatrical artificiality of this performance, King Diamond is presented as, and received as, a genuine outspoken Satanist. Mercyful Fate embraced theatricality in visual, sartorial, lyrical, and sonic qualities. Yet, at the same time, Mercyful Fate presented their theatrical Satanism as part of their real, authentic identity. Thus, Mercyful Fate provides one coherent model of authentic black metal identity.

In this chapter, I focus on the way King Diamond constructed their black metal identity as authentic by focusing on what I will call a rhetoric of theatrical authenticity. Through their visual presentation, their lyrics, and their musical qualities, Mercyful Fate exhibited a spectacular and theatrical vision of black metal ideology and an embrace of Satanism. While this theatricality has a long history in rock music, dating back to acts like Alice Cooper, Black Sabbath, and Kiss, Mercyful Fate presented their theatrical narratives of Satan and evil as an expression of their authentic beliefs and attitudes, thus constructing a rhetoric of authentic theatricality.

Utilizing the framework outlined in Chapter One, in this chapter, I will be looking at Mercyful Fate in relation to their second album, *Don't Break the Oath*. I will conduct hits analysis through three key stages, (1) an "ideological" assessment of visual and material artifacts that surrounded the band and *Don't Break the Oath*, (2) an examination of the record's lyrical content, and (3) an analysis of the sonic qualities, which includes musical and vocal qualities of Mercyful Fate's sound.

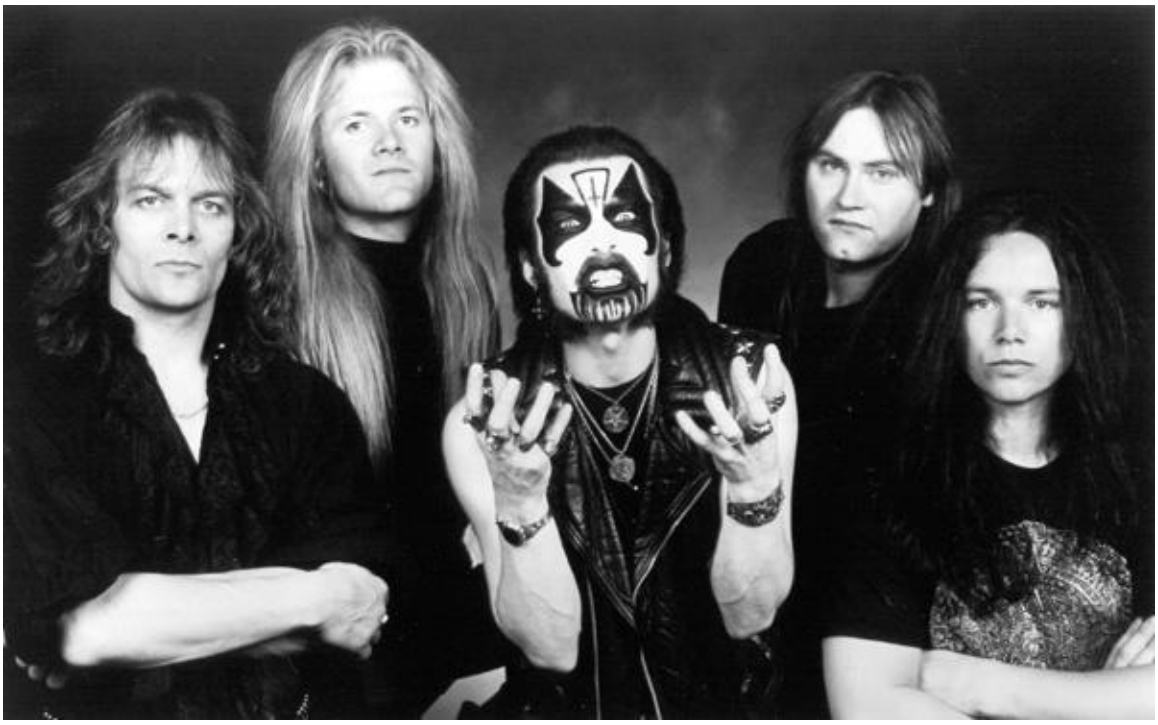


Figure 1

Ideological Assessment

Firstly, I would like to begin with a note of the impact of ideological forces on heavy and black metal. I will keep it brief before going into the assessment. According to Keith Kahn-Harris (2019), “Heavy metal’s aesthetics are the aesthetics of essentialism,” he continues, “Metal culture celebrates that which is ‘true,’ that which expresses the essence of an individual or a group, that which is unmediated” (26). Primarily concerned with these truthful and authentic experiences, there is a lot of demand for artists in terms of how they cater or fit in with their respective audiences. We see this in cases such as Richard Peterson’s analysis of country music as well as in its early developments there are many debates on “who” is and can be considered country during the genre’s early

development. This question of who counts as authentic is also key to the metal and black metal community as Walser (1993) explores this with his research on early heavy metal and hard rock with bands such as Van Halen.

Metal identity is not entirely set or stagnant, a point I will explore throughout this thesis, scholars have identified some core aspects of the "authentic" metal identity. As far back as Walser (1993), many have discussed how deeply ingrained masculinity and metal both are. As Kahn-Harris suggests, there is a metal identity "triad," based on white, heteronormative masculinity forms. Particularly, Niall Scott (2016) also contends that masculinity in metal has ultimately been faced with serious inaccuracies and attributions as being masculinity in crisis. However, Scott (2016) suggests that metal is rather in a more confident state of flux and diverse expressions (121). Ultimately, it is important to understand moving forward many metal artists exist within these various masculine paradigms.

Many bands in the black metal subgenre intermingle this triad of white, male, and heteronormative within a frame of the monstrous, gothic, and evil. Going back to bands such as Black Sabbath, it was cool to be considered dark and spooky. This is very much embraced by bands in the first wave of black metal with bands like Venom and Mercyful Fate.

Utilizing a loose version of the model developed by Tagg, I begin with a focus on the ideological context since the visual presentation of Mercyful Fate was key to their constructed authenticity. I will open with the important context surrounding this record as

a text and its impacts on the first and second waves of black metal. Following this, I will address King Diamond's theatrical authenticity throughout each section of the chapter. Ultimately, I will be addressing the ways "Don't Break the Oath" and Mercyful Fate's constructed theatrical authenticity acts as a cultural and ideological product of its time, especially as a foundational record for black metal.

As mentioned previously, in the first wave of black metal, there was a trend of bands rejecting the notion that theological and moral evil is something bad and must be denounced. Of course, bands like Slayer, Venom, and Mercyful Fate lean into the imagery and rhetoric of Satanism we see in the late 1970s into the 1980s. I contend that this shift into having violence, Satanism, and evil as a centerpiece is essential to the creation of the first and later the second wave of black metal. However, in the hands of Mercyful Fate, this is exhibited on the stage and in the record in a more theatrical and fantastic form rather than any kinds of literal human sacrifice and devil worship the media believed them to be doing.

My main argument and observation with this record is that Mercyful Fate and King Diamond, although sonically varying off the path of many first wave bands, are the most authentic when considering their more ideological commitments which can be seen in the lyrics and performances. In the next section, I will address more contextual details that give the background to the album's release, then look at the album including various magazines and zine coverage of the album.

Theatre, Neoliberalism, and Satan

During the formation of the first wave of black metal, there were a couple very large events that I argue built up the foundation for bands such as Venom and Mercyful Fate to exist. In fact, these events will be pulled into the third chapter as these events in varied forms still exist today. These two events would be the explosion of neoliberal politics and the Satanic turn.

The entrance of neoliberalism and issues of Satan both enter into this discussion of authenticity within the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, contemporary neoliberalism comes about in the same period as metal's birth as a genre of music, quite possibly being the source of its emergence. Patterson (2013), O'Neill (2017), and Christe (2003) all contend, metal arrived in the mid-to late 1970s with acts such as Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, both British bands are linked to the arrival of Thatcherism and Neoliberal politics eventually causing the economic downturn in the United Kingdom. While this period also gave birth to genres like punk rock, this period represents a fundamental change in alternative subculture and music as a whole.

Looking from the historicized position that authenticity holds, there are serious changes that take place with the introduction of neoliberalism. After the creation of marketing in the industrial era, there began a clamoring for something to be considered authentic and true, in a sea of mass-produced products (Peterson, 2005; Moore, 2002). This radically changes however, especially as the emphasis on what it means to be authentic and how to gauge your own agency, seems to change hands. In the modern period, one way of understanding authenticity's position is viewing oneself as property,

to be bought and sold as is. The main emphasis is as Gershon (2011) contends, that this arrival of neoliberalism has shifted us away from the classic liberal conception of the individual owning themself as property, over to this idea that the individual rather than being property is more of a business. In this shift to a neoliberal paradigm, the individual's sense of agency and authenticity should reflect the ideals and rationality of the market; to sell yourself as a marketable entity, a commodity. Moving authenticity further into this market-dependent space, we can see the chaos play out as the rise of metal and the Satanic turn take place.

I want to put into perspective how this train of thought works and has operated in the early stages of black metal, and with what I would call, the "Satanic Turn" that takes place. In this same period, between the late 1970s, and 1980s, there is an increase in media coverage and moral outrage over horror movies, metal music, queer identities, and feminism (Beard, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Hay, 2018; Petro, 2018). For example, after the popularity of TV programs like, Geraldo Rivera's 1988 TV expose, *Exposing Satan's Underground*, there is an ever-increasing pressure on alternative subculture, especially metal acts. In this period, entering the 1980s, many media outlets and metal bands slowly began to realize that Satan sells.

However, to an extent the allegations of metal's ties to Satanism or occultism are generally true. As Patterson (2013) and Christe (2003) note, Black Sabbath's name comes from Geezer Butler seeing the 1963 horror movie, *Black Sabbath*, featuring Boris Karloff. Even Moynihan and Søderlind (2003) make note of Led Zeppelin's ties to

occultism and guitarist interest in Aleister Crowley eventually purchasing the former home of Crowley, Boleskine House, in Scotland. Although there is a litany of examples, many of the accusations fall flat if addressing the lyrics or actual beliefs of band members.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, there is a tipping point that takes place to the media amplification of Christian outrage that is best characterized by the band, Venom. In an interview, lead singer of Venom, Cronos states, “That was always my problem with Ozzy. He would sing about dark futures then spoilt it all by going, ‘Oh God, help me!’ Duh, wrong!’ he continues, “That was stopping one step short of where I wanted to take this band. We were prepared to go beyond the Hammer Horror of Black Sabbath” (O’Neill, 2017, p. 90). Explicitly leaning into a more Satanic image, Venom intended to replace Black Sabbath’s “apologetic” and “scared” approach to topics of the infernal, releasing tracks such as ‘In League with Satan’ (Christe, 2003; Patterson, 2013; O’Neill, 2017). However, despite Cronos and Venom’s pushing of sonic and aesthetic boundaries for metal bands, their authenticity and commitment to “Satan” was questionable. In several interviews collected by Moynihan and Søderlind (2003), Cronos confirms the band’s stance as, “Look, I don’t preach Satanism, occultism, witchcraft, or anything” he continues, “Rock and Roll is basically entertainment and that’s as far as it goes” (p. 13-14). In interviews like this one, it seems that Venom played the market by leaning into the game of using Satan as a way to make it in the entertainment business, rather than actually professing these beliefs.

Unlike bands like Venom, sonically Mercyful Fate is more cleaned up and melodic, and their lyrics are more serious and believably Satanic in nature. The Satanic, occult turn that is started by bands like Venom, however, is key for understanding the image and authenticity of acts like King Diamond. In this following section, I am going to demonstrate through various images and fan zines how King Diamond articulated their more theatrical way of approaching the Satanic turn.

Zines and Imagery

To discuss Mercyful Fate and the reception of "Don't Break the Oath," it is important to look at the various interviews and responses to the band. By analyzing fan zines and metal magazines found in various internet archives I can address what Tagg labels, the emitter and receiver relationship, in respect to this "Satanic Turn" and Mercyful Fate's status as authentic. The purpose of this section as well is to demonstrate the personality of this band compared to other first wave black metal acts at the time, especially discussing how they can be ascribed as "authentic" by the fans.

First, I want to discuss the imagery of the record and the band itself, as they both serve as points of interest. It is important to understand what makes Mercyful Fate's performance seem authentic to their audience and at least one component of this is their visual presentation. In other words, I will be discussing how Mercyful Fate and "Don't Break the Oath" are packaged for the audience.

While Mercyful Fate and King Diamond are well known for their virtuosity, there

also is a huge portion of their image reliant on King Diamond's theatrical performance. Aside from his ghastly falsetto, King Diamond is famous for his gothic attire often supporting black capes, the infamous black and white face paint, and a microphone held together by human bones (see figure 1). Clad in black leather and various accessories, King Diamond was often accused of ripping off figures such as KISS's makeup routine. Eventually in a recent interview commenting on the possible lawsuit threats by Gene Simmons, King Diamond clarifies,

> "No, I haven't," he replied. "I think that would be a lot of fun. I have no outstanding stuff with him. There is a lot of reasons why this happened: [Kiss] dropped their makeup around this time, but they still had the copyright on the look. I was never influenced by them – my influences were Peter Gabriel and Alice Cooper. I said, 'I don't have a lot of money that you can sue me for, but you have a lot of money that other people can sue you for.' They were not the first to wear makeup. It never got to be a lawsuit, it just got stirred up" (Alleva, 2022).

To say the least, King Diamond's makeup style has been regarded as iconic, eventually finding a new name in the second wave of black metal, as "corpse paint" is one of the keys defining factors of his character. We can see this being discussed in the 1984 American fan zine, *Hardcore No. 1,* where a reviewer and fan exclaims, "So what, if King Diamond wears make-up! So, WHAT!!!," they continue, "Who gives a FUCK!!! MERCYFUL FATE plays some of the best Heavy Metal music in the world, BAR NONE!!!" (Figure 2). This early discourse surrounding his make-up is generally limited, however, the discussion on the ground can be seen immediately between their first and second release with Roadrunner Records.

In fact, within this same issue, there is a discussion of "Don't Break the Oath" as it came out in the same year. Looking back at Figure 2, the reviewer Todd Kakazu writes,

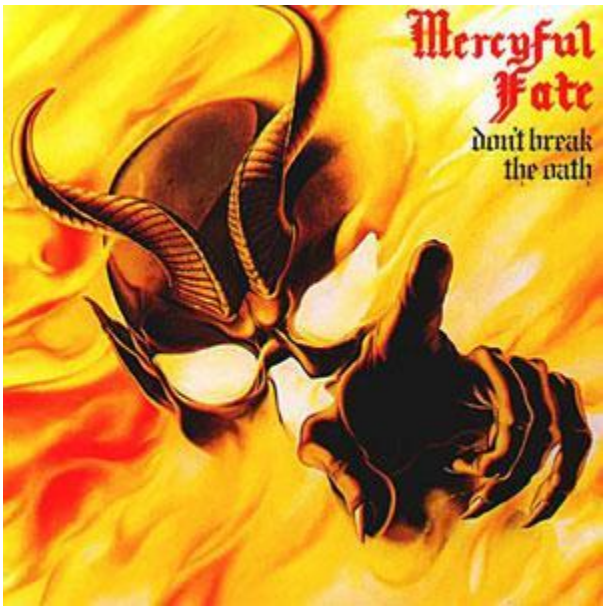
"Now we have their latest LP and a new aggregation of HM classics, such as "The Oath", "Come to The Sabbath", "A Dangerous Meeting", "Desecration of Souls", etc." (*Hardcore,* 1984). The reviewer goes on to do a review of the musical qualities of the record as well, hailing it and Mercyful Fate something to give a listen to.

We can see in Figures 5 through 8, an important interview with King Diamond and review of Mercyful Fate as well. These images are from the Portland based, *Heavy Heroes*' 1984 Fall issue. Although it does not name the interviewer, the interview itself is claimed to have been done with King Diamond after Mercyful Fate's first show in the United States. It starts briefly discussing the vocalist's thoughts on the differences and similarities between European and American audiences. Including a brief discussion about differences in production when recording "Don't Break the Oath" compared to "Melissa."

As the interview continues it eventually breaks into a discussion about media coverage by the English and American press concerning King Diamond and the band's beliefs surrounding Satanism and their image as a band. In this interview, there is definitive evidence concerning the theatrics of King Diamond and the band. The interviewer makes a comment about marketability stating, "A lot of comments have been made that in order to make it past cult status you'll have to drop the "satanic image." What do you think of this?" (*Heavy Heroes,* 1984, p. 9). This is an interesting question as it is a direct discussion of the band's authenticity and marketability. The question itself implies that in order to advance and become more commercially viable, they have to

leave “cult” status and drop the Satanic imagery and lyrics. This is interesting when bands such as Mötley Crüe released their hit record, “Shout at the Devil” in 1983. The record features track such as “Shout at the Devil,” “God Bless the Children of the Beast,” and a cover of the Beatles’ track, “Helter Skelter.” Considered one of Crüe’s most successful records, I find the negotiation of how much a band can lean into Satanic imagery before being a brand risk interesting.

It is in this interview where King Diamond resolidifies his and the band’s authenticity especially in terms of their first- and third-person authenticity. Ultimately, King Diamond goes on to claim that the band is not trying to persuade or preach to their fans. King Diamond states, “I don’t care what belief people have,” he continues, “We can all be good friends and have a good time together. The show we put up is no worse than say, the picture ‘Halloween Night’” (*Heavy Heroes,* 1984, p. 9). While here he is deflecting away from his own personal views, it is clear that to Diamond and the band, their act is no more different than a horror movie. While similar to claims made by Cronos of Venom, that this form of expression is more entertainment. King Diamond doubles down on his personal views and how this impacts the music later in the interview. This also alters how the ideological portion of early black metal is formed. In the interview, King Diamond later states, “It seems so silly because they don’t even know what satanism is,” he continues, “It has nothing to do with being evil” (*Heavy Heroes*, 1984, p. 9). Reinforcing the stance that although the band dabbles in infernal forces, Diamond places Mercyful Fate and other first wave black metal bands act rather as adversaries to mainstream trends and popular music versus actually being evil.



As a final point, I'd like to address the artwork on the record itself. "Don't Break the Oath," features a dark skull bearing horns, surrounded by flames pointing towards whoever seems to pass by or give it a look (see Figure 2). The artwork for many of King Diamond and Mercyful Fate's projects have been done by Swedish artist, Thomas Holm. Many of his contributions are listed on the website archive, Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives. Looking at Figures 3 and 4, we can see how it looks in comparison to the previous album, "Melissa," artwork also done by Thomas Holm. The artwork for "Don't Break the Oath" leans heavier into the more Satanic or occult imagery that has not typically been seen besides Venom's pentagram and goat head. The image is clearly Satanic and yet also cartoonish and exaggerated in nature. The dark devil figure visible behind bright yellow flames pointing out at the viewer, an indication of a kind of invitation or summoning into a hellish nightmare. Given the prominence of the album's title, "Don't Break the Oath," in the upper right corner the pointing figure can also be viewed as issuing a warning to those listening to the album. To listen to Mercyful Fate is to create an oath that is not to be broken, a commandment and, potentially, a threat.

Taken together, the sartorial, performative, and visual elements combine to craft a theatrical image of Satanism. While this theatrical evil persona is not entirely new, the band's insistence that their belief in Satanism were genuine and sincere were widely reported in the music magazines and zines. Thus, Mercyful Fate's theatrical persona was crafted as an authentic identity, one in which a commitment to evil and Satanism was crafted in its most dramatic and spectacular form while remaining sincere.

Lyrical Analysis

There is no record better for discussing the theatrical elements of Mercyful Fate than their hit and second record "Don't Break the Oath." The record was produced by Roadrunner records this album continued off the foundations laid by their first album, "Melissa" that was released the year prior. These two records were the first and last albums released by the band in the 1980s, as King Diamond went on to pursue a career with his very own solo act. The best way to look at this album is by selecting a few songs that stand out as defining Mercyful Fate's own image, as well as how it created what is now known as black metal. The songs I selected are: (Insert songs). Each song will be put through my proposed methodological framework to have a deeper rhetorical and musicological understanding of how black metal and its authenticity is constructed.

In this section, I will provide a close analysis of the lyrics in the selected songs. Primarily this is to discuss how Mercyful Fate lyrics are presented as true to themselves and situation, which Moore (2002) suggests is key for authenticity in song writing. In this case, I will be looking at the lyrics of four selected songs that demonstrate each of these

required senses when analyzing authenticity in music. I will also demonstrate how each of those songs fits within the more ideological aspects of black metal, and in the next chapter demonstrate how these lyrics impact future black metal artists.

According to Moore (2002), "Authenticity' is a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural and, thus, historicized position. It is ascribed, not inscribed" (210). The purpose of a classification system is to analyze each of the lyrics with and how they exhibit authenticity for Mercyful Fate as clearly as possible. I am going to discuss how these lyrics can be ascribed different qualities within the classifications. Moore (2002) developed three classifications of authenticity: first, second, and third person which can also be written as authenticity of expression, execution, and experience. I will address how each of these work within the various lyrical selections. Ultimately, I am ascribing that Mercyful Fate's authenticity is grounded in King Diamond's theatrical and fantastical lyrical choices representing his "ideological purity" to being perceived as evil.

"The Oath"

For the first song, I am going to start with the track, "The Oath," out of all the tracks it is the most provocative and clearly theatrically Satanic in nature. I contend that this song is the most theatrical, authentic and "true to oneself," as King Diamond exhibits what can be called, first person authenticity, also known as *authenticity of expression*. According to Moore (2002), first person authenticity comes from the originator (composer, performer) successfully deploys an utterance that conveys integrity to the

audience in an attempt to communicate through an unmediated form. The lyrics to the song go as follows:

(Intro)

By the symbol of the creator, I swear henceforth to be

A faithful servant of his most puissant arch-angel

The prince Lucifer, whom the creator designated as his regent

And Lord of this world, Amen

(Verse 1)

I deny Jesus Christ, the deceiver

And I abjure the Christian faith

Holding in contempt all of its works

(Bridge/Solos)

(Verse 2)

As a being now possessed of a human body

In this world I swear to give my full allegiance

To its lawful master to worship him

Our Lord, oh, Satan and no other

In the name of Satan, the ruler of Earth

Open wide the gates of Hell and come forth from the abyss

By these names, oh, Satan, Leviathan

Belial, Lucifer, I will kiss the goat

(Guitar Solo/Bass Solos)

(Bridge)

(Verse 3)

I swear to give my mind

My body and soul unreservedly

To the furtherance of our Lord

Our Lord Satan, where Satan designs

(Bridge)

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law

(Outro)

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be

A world without end,

(Guitar Solo)

Amen (The Oath, 1984)

The first stanza is sung during the very beginning of the track and can be heard as a ghastly prayer to Satan backed by the thunder, synthesizer drones, and church organ. This is King Diamond's initiation before beginning the song's namesake. Most notably about this song is that it is literally written in the first person. When King Diamond sings, "I deny Christ, the deceiver" this is a rejection that he is doing himself, and it is onto the audience to ascribe his authenticity. The rest of the song acts as an oath to Satan and as a rejection of Christianity, something not typically seen in heavy metal lyrics until bands like Mercyful Fate and Venom. Unlike Black Sabbath's scared-Christian approach to the experience of the infernal, it has now been replaced by celebration of what is explicitly Satanic, that Satan is now an ally of the artist, and the listener.

While Satanic themes were common in metal, “The Oath” differs from those written by earlier metal bands like Black Sabbath or even fellow black metal artists like Venom. Here we can see in the middle stanzas King Diamond engaging in a more theatrical, and formal prayer to Satan. This goes to the extreme of not only giving his soul to Satan, but also Diamond states giving his mind and body as well to the whim of Satan. This track marks what makes King Diamond an authentic character, especially within the standards of first-person authenticity. King Diamond is displaying his commitment to Satanism via prayer and oath to the ruinous power in the first person. Outside of the music, this track is also an exhibition of King Diamond’s reported real commitment to Satanism (O’Neill, 2017; Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003). Where King Diamond expresses his feelings on the idea that he needs to give up the “satanic act” in order to leave cult status.

What makes these lyrics more provocative is that the lyrics seem to match the spoken words of a recorded Satanic Black Mass on the record, “Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls” by Coven in 1969. As Moynihan and Søderlind (2003) report, Coven’s Satanic Mass was the source of public outrage as they not only recorded it live, but also performed it live on many occasions. The band even attempted to have Anton LaVey, a Satanist leader, perform the mass himself in Detroit during the 1970s. Although Coven is by no means a household name, Moynihan and Søderlind (2003) note that in an interview with King Diamond, Diamond saw Coven live in Denmark around 1971. King Diamond states having an affinity for the lead vocalist, Jinx: “An amazing singer, her voice, her range… not that I stand up for the viewpoints on the Witchcraft record, which

was like good old Christian Satanism. But they had something about them that I liked…" (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003, p. 8). Although King Diamond's lyrics are paraphrased versions of this Satanic Black Mass by Coven, I find it important to mention the links between both tracks and recordings. Because of this link, I contend this also gives grounds to attribute third person authenticity to this track and the band. Third person authenticity can also be written as *authenticity of execution*, which can be characterized by Moore (2002), "This arises when a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance" (p. 218). By continuing the use of these lyrics and links to past examples of Satanic Masses, King Diamond and Mercyful Fate are reinforcing their image as committed to Satanism via the importance of this more performed act of dedication to Satan.

This commitment to Satanism is also exhibited in other songs on the record, especially in tracks such as "A Dangerous Meeting" and "Come to the Sabbath." I will discuss "A Dangerous Meeting" in terms of lyrical analysis and authenticity then move onto the third and final section dealing with an ideological assessment of Mercyful Fate and "Don't Break the Oath" before moving onto the third chapter.

"Come to the Sabbath"

This next track is the final song on the record and arguably the most well-known track. "Come to the Sabbath" sonically and lyrically is a very interesting song as it does not match with the mainstream of the first wave of death metal. Sonically, it mimics more progressive and speed metal qualities found in bands like Judas Priest. Featuring double

bass driven runs, halftime sections, as well as cheerier, guitar solo filled sound. This is juxtaposed by the lyrics that beckon for the audience to join the satanic sabbath. As King Diamond ghastly calls out in the first verse, then in the later chorus sections. The lyrics go as follows:

(Verse 1)
Come come to the Sabbath, down by the
Ruined Bridge
Witches and Demons are coming
Just follow the magic Call
Come come to the Sabbath, down by the
Ruined Bridge
Later on the Master will join us
Called from the Heart of Hell

(Bridge)

(Verse 2)
At first we light up a Fire, and then we hail
Our Lord
Two Candles, a black and a white, are placed
Upon the Altar
North, South, East and West, and so we
Clean the Air

High Priestess invoking the Devil, infernal

Names

are spoken

(Chorus)

Come to the Sabbath...Sabbath

...Sabbath...Sabbath

Come to the Sabbath

(Verse 3)

The Ceremony's proceeding, it's Time to

Grant your Wishes

An Evil Curse on the Priest who took the Life

Of Melissa

Now we must close up the Ritual, read the

Enochian Key

And so it will be done, Amen... now come

(Chorus)

Come to the Sabbath...Sabbath

...Sabbath...Sabbath

Come to the Sabbath...now here we come

(Guitar Solo)

(Bridge/Outro)

If you say Heaven, I say a Castle of Lies

You say forgive him, I say Revenge

My sweet Satan, You are The One

("Come to the Sabbath," 1984)

This track is ultimately similar to "The Oath," mainly appealing to first- and third-person authenticity as it tries to create an imaginative experience and expression to beckon the audience to join. We can see this as King Diamond uses mainly first and third person pronouns in reference to himself and the audience in the song taking part in a satanic sabbath. In the first verse, setting the scene and inviting us to the "ruined bridge" where the Sabbath takes place. Here King Diamond is using these aspects to tell more of a theatrical story about witchcraft and Satanic ritual similar to what we hear in other tracks as well. In the second and third verses, he is describing what is occurring during the ritual and mentioning a character! Melissa, interestingly, is the name of Mercyful Fate's first record from 1983, which also contains a track entitled "Melissa."

The most important verse that reinforces Mercyful Fate and King Diamond's positionality would be the final outro lyrics. King Diamond sings, "If you say Heaven, I say a Castle of Lies. You say forgive him; I say Revenge. My sweet Satan, You are The One" creating the polemical argument about Christianity and Satan specifically. Ultimately, it is the lyrics of these songs that show Mercyful Fate and King Diamond's

allegiances to Satan. Of course, these allegiances primarily exist in song for the audiences and in this chapter. Sonically, very diverse from the rest of black metal's first wave, Mercyful Fate doubled down on the ideological requirements of being evil and discussing topics such as Satanism and witchcraft. This commitment ultimately these are some of the qualities that rhetorically make them more authentic than many other bands during this period. Especially shouting these lyrics globally at a time where Satanism was public enemy number one (O'Neill, 2017; Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003). It is this divergence from the mainstream and acceptability that makes these lyrics all the more provocative and authentic.

Sonic Analysis

In this section, I would like to rehash the various defining qualities and characteristics of music and sound that I will be analyzing in each song. Of course, I am attempting to marry not only the sonic rhetoric and rhetoric of sound as mentioned by Eckstein and Gunn; however, but I am also bringing in musicology via Phillip Tagg and Robert Walser. This interdisciplinary effort is to develop practice with a new way of analyzing music and sound for those of us rhetoricians interested in music.

To start, I want to introduce a checklist provided by Phillip Tagg. Tagg (2015) identifies several sound qualities: aspects of time, melodic aspects, orchestrational aspects, aspects of tonality and texture, dynamic aspects, acoustical aspects, and finally electromusical and mechanical aspects (9). Of course, this laundry list of aspects acts much more as a general roadmap, which does not need to be followed too closely. There

are thousands of songs and different ears will notice different aspects. To boil it down, I will be addressing those that stick out the most and are most important for defining black metal as a subgenre.

In the case of this section, I want to begin by breaking down Mercyful Fate's hit record, "Don't Break the Oath," and how it sonically stands out especially considering its place within the black metal's canon. The record features a variety of different tracks including the previously mentioned, "The Oath," and "Come to the Sabbath." All of the record's tracks contain their own various quirks and characteristics that make them stand out. In fact, the track "To One Far Away," takes a wild turn with a more instrumental and romantic segment breaking up the constant wailing and slamming. In this final section, I will focus on the sonic qualities of "The Oath" to demonstrate not only Mercyful Fate's theatrical sensibilities but also how they fit within the black metal canon.

Sonic Qualities: "The Oath"

I would like to start in the middle of the record, arguably the climax, with the song "The Oath." It starts with a very eerie John Carpenter-esque introduction similar to Black Sabbath's "Black Sabbath," featuring synthesizer chord progression tagged with the howling wind and thunder followed by church bells and creepy laughter, building up a more horror-based soundscape. Roughly one minute and thirty seconds into the track, a church organ begins to play a minor chord progression that launches us into the song. With a little break, the song launches into an odd-time signature punishing drive given to us by the double bass drum groove that drives the song throughout the remainder of its

7:34 minute runtime. The reason I decided to analyze this song first is because it exhibits a lot of what defines not only Mercyful Fate, but also the early periods of black and heavy metal. Sonically, “The Oath” contains a variety of factors that connects to other bands of this era. Primarily, I want to focus on comparing this to its sonic sibling, thrash metal, as that was the dominant force in metal during this time with bands like Metallica (Christe, 2003; O’Neill, 2017). What black and thrash metal both exhibits are two main trends: punk’s fast tempos, aggression, and growls paired with virtuosity and theatrics seen by hard rock and early heavy metal. As Walser (1993) writes, “Thrash bands negotiate fast tempos, meter changes, and complicated arrangements with precise ensemble coordination” (14). This is not to say that Mercyful Fate is a thrash metal band, however, its influences and attitudes are very pervasive. In “The Oath,” this can be clearly seen in the instrumental portion of the song, as the listener is hit with this fast, complex opening that follows the evil and horror-soundtrack introduction.

One way of better understanding the different sonic qualities exhibited by Mercyful Fate from their contemporaries is by looking at it all as a spectrum, rather than a linear progression. We can better place Mercyful Fate on this spectrum through our checklist provided by Tagg. First, I would like to address the aspects of time as that is a key aspect that is prevalent throughout black and heavy metal as a whole. Comparing Mercyful Fate to their predecessors such as Black Sabbath, they are notably faster, playing roughly 160 beats-per-minute (BPM) at a triplet, odd time feel. In his discussion of tempo, Mark Mynett (2019) defines the differences in tempo between traditional heavy metal (THM) and contemporary metal music (CMM), as songs go from 120-160 BPM to

later years gradually increasing to 150-250 BPM. This is significant as Mercyful Fate falls in the THM category in terms of tempo, however, there is evidence of the evolution of tempo throughout the record as well.

Regarding time signature, most Western and popular songs are played at what is called 4/4, four beats per measure in two to three note groupings, this is common for THM while the evolution into CMM we see the increased use of 32nd notes and odd time signatures. In songs like, “The Oath,” “Nightmare,” and “Come to the Sabbath” we get a feel of not only different odd time signatures, but more complex rhythms and patterns fit into the 4/4 measure as well. Often, time signatures and tempos shift throughout each of the songs as well! In “Come to the Sabbath,” the band shifts between faster sections and half-time feels, when the song’s meter is cut in half resulting in a slower pace, throughout. This is a common practice that originates in this period of 1980s heavy metal, especially within the first wave of black metal.

One thing that sets Mercyful Fate outside of other first wave black metal bands, as well as their thrash and punk counterparts, is King Diamonds vocals. Often many vocalists have resorted to lower pitched screams and growls, even without ever really receiving vocal training. The importance of vocals is not only forming your authentic self as a frontperson, but also defining the view that the band is authentic as well. Returning to Peterson (1997), in country music there was often the association that you had to sound a certain way in order to be considered ‘real’ country. We see this in other works as well, as Amanda Edgar (2014) notes, the voice is often associated with racial, ethnic, and class

borders. In terms of metal however, the connotation is often decidedly white and male, and King Diamond's vocals enact a kind of theatrical aggressiveness. Indeed, I argue that rather than using a more natural singing voice, the use of screaming and growling in metal is how one constructs themselves as authentic. Edgar (2014) writes, "The racialized borders that structure popular music's genres are rhetorically defined and maintained. As such, these borders can be fluid and permeable, but only for those in positions of power" (p. 168). Mercyful Fate, through King Diamond's vocals, enact a theatrical version of white, male power but one that is resistant, even blasphemous, to traditional western Christianity. This style, as Walser and Kahn-Harris note, was crucial to the later evolution of black and death metal, which often contain more intense forms of screams and growls.

King Diamond deploys occasional growls but contrasts these with his more well known ghastly falsetto voice. The term falsetto, in Latin means "false voice," where the vocalist hits higher and more airy notes above their typical register (Jackson, 2022). This is compounded by the bordering that takes place via gender and voice. As discussed in the previous chapter, the voice is often categorized based on preconceived notions of how they sound to the listener. As Fugate (2006) contends, "Depending on the listener's previous conceptions of singing, a recorded falsetto voice could sound feminine, or it could sound masculine. In either case, when the listener sees the person singing, he/she expects the sex of the singer to be the one that is being heard in his/her mind's ear" (6). In the case of heavy metal this is interesting as figures like Rob Halford of Judas Priest, a classically trained vocalist, uses his virtuosity and hyper-masculine fashion to transcend

the label of his voice being “feminine.” This makes the case for King Diamond interesting as he on record is by no means a trained vocalist. However, this means his pure talent and can make him seem as a more authentic musician as his voice is undoctored by production. Of course, King Diamond’s iconic voice defines him as a vocalist and can be heard on all his records and singles.

Taken together, the tempo and vocals craft a theatrical sense of aggressive white masculinity but one that is at odds with the broader dynamics of western culture. The embrace of the macabre and Satanic is enacted in both the sonic landscape of the music, particularly the opening of “The Oath,” but also in King Diamond’s explicitly otherworldly and theatrical vocal stylings. While I have focused on only one song, I contend that “The Oath” includes all the major features of Mercyful Fate and King Diamond’s music and provides key insights into the band’s construction of its authentic sound and identity: Creepy ambient noise, fast and complex rhythms, topped with the ghastly falsetto crying out for Satan.

Conclusion

The first wave of black metal is an interesting occurrence during a very turbulent time in metal’s earliest years. Seen as a microcosm that exists inside the various realms of heavy metal, innovators such as Mercyful Fate made it possible to push the envelope for edgier and more infernally minded musicians. Looking at “Don’t Break the Oath” through Tagg’s model helps demonstrate the various ways the record is constructed and presented as authentic. While the band would break up shortly after the album’s release,

“Don’t Break the Oath” skyrocketed the band’s popularity and led to King Diamond’s arguably even more successful solo projects. Mercyful Fate and King Diamond exhibit the more conventionally acceptable theatrical performances of authenticity via their Satanic image. This theatrical vision of Satanic identity was influential not only for those who imitated it but, importantly, for those bands that rejected it and sought to enact a different, more literally violent, vision of black metal authenticity. While King Diamond focused more on the melodrama of the conflict between Satanism and the mortal realm, it never pushed into the world of extreme violence, except in very small onstage allegory. This extreme shift into violence beyond the music and off the stage is what I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: "Deathcrush"

As the 1980s progressed, the first wave of black metal began to wane. After the success of "Don't Break the Oath," King Diamond left the band to pursue a solo career, very similar to Ozzy Osbourne at the time. In fact, despite its successful bands, black metal seemed to be going further and further underground. This all changed with the arrival of the early 1990s as black metal was propelled back into the mainstream conversation with church burnings and murder in Norway. This is all due to a band named, Mayhem, formed in 1984, its members began to form a new scene and transformed the image of black metal. In this chapter, I will discuss the revolution in black metal led by Mayhem and its increasing reliance on acts of violence in crafting a sense of authenticity. I argue that Mayhem, led by Euronymous, takes up the mantle of performing authenticity through reveling in acts of violence and celebrating its gruesome and repulsive aftermath. Mayhem's emphasis on actual violence served as a repudiation of Mercyful Fate's more theatrical vision of darkness and Satanism and the public attention and outcry to their message also led to increased visibility for the black metal's growing second wave.

With Mayhem, I am looking at how they pushed the boundaries for heavy and black metal in terms of visual presentation, lyrics, and sound quality. Compared to Mercyful Fate's rhetorical construction of authenticity, Mayhem goes in two new directions; firstly, Mayhem sonically diverges from what other many metal bands regardless of subgenre have previously produced. Not including punk or grindcore scenes, Mayhem embraces more extreme lyrics and sound compared to their

contemporaries. Secondly, Mayhem attempts to redefine what it means to be authentic and how to perform it within metal. In order to do this, Mayhem embraces and amplifies what was once a simulated, theatrical experience through the use of more violent means to be seen as real. It was no longer sufficient to reject the teachings for Christianity, Mayhem's rhetoric of authenticity enacted and celebrated burning churches and violence.

Similar to the last chapter, my main analysis will be split into three major parts: (1) an ideological assessment and critique based upon the album itself, and the context surrounding the band and its release, (2) lyrical analysis off of several selected songs, and finally, (3) the sonic analysis of Mayhem's "Deathcrush" EP (1987). Here it is worth offering a content warming given the nature of Mayhem's lyrics, there will be discussion of themes and representations of murder, suicide, and necrophilia, among other unsavory topics. The graphic nature of these discussions and celebration of the repulsive is, in my analysis, a key part of their rhetoric of violent authenticity.

Context

Heavy metal throughout the 1980s reached new peaks as it produced new bands, styles, and fans across the globe. With bands such as Metallica pushing the boundaries of thrash, and glam bands rocking on MTV, metal was seemingly changing every day. Black metal itself saw its highs and lows remaining more of cult status in the mid- to late 1980s with Venom being the most prominent band. Black metal acts such as Hellhammer changed their name and aesthetics to "Celtic Frost," playing more experimental styles, and Bathory shifted to a more "Viking metal" focus (Christe, 2003; O'Neill, 2017). It was in the lull period, however, where underground extreme and proto-black metal began

to have sparks, particularly in more isolated regions of Northern Europe and Brazil. As O'Neill (2017) writes, "Often the most inventive and original bands in heavy metal come from scenes that are geographically isolated," he continues, "Unable to homogenize in the way bigger scenes often do, with no touring bands coming through and influencing everyone in the same way, musicians in remote scenes have to make their own fun, as during the war" (p. 104). In fact, Keith Harris (2000) also discusses the links between the extreme's global and local image, analyzing the Brazilian band Sepultura, who also formed during their mid-1980s period, and bands like Sarcófago. Harris (2000) argues, "Local scenes have been particularly important in pioneering new styles that have gone on to be popular through the global scene" (p. 16). This global, yet local and isolated situation also spawned the band Mayhem, in the suburban town of Langhus, Norway in 1984.

Langhus was a relatively quiet suburban area just outside of the capital city of Oslo. Here, we find the first members of the band, bassist Jørn Stubberud (aka "Necrobutcher") and drummer Kjetil Manheim (aka "Manheim"), who formed the band Mayhem based on the Venom song, "Mayhem with Mercy." The two later joined forces with Øystein Aarseth, originally taking the stage name "Destructor," then later changing it to the infamous, "Euronymous." I will be addressing them by their stage names due to the variety of different characters that will appear. In an interview, Necrobutcher claims that Euronymous lived in a nearby town, and would have been in the band immediately if only he had lived a few kilometers closer (Patterson, 2013). However, both met Euronymous later and according to Manheim it was, "Love at first sight." In this period

between 1984 to 1986, the band predominantly played covers of songs by Venom and Celtic Frost at various types of show, often to the audience's dismay.

In this same period prior to "Deathcrush," the band began to meet with other likeminded groups as well as zine writer, Jon Kristiansen (aka "Metalion") who ran the *Slayer Mag* fan zine that promoted many of the early black metal acts from Norway. As Wheaton and Beal (2003) assert, there is a heavy importance on the role of niche media; for example, fan zines, in affirming key factors that go into labeling something as authentic. For this reason, it is important we look at the *Slayer Mag* by Metalion. In fact, Metalion himself developed a friendship with Mayhem making him one of their fiercest supporters in this early period. This is where much of Mayhem's authentic work begins, as authenticity is socially and culturally constructed, it takes effort to appeal to the audience as authentic. I argue that it is with the support of Metalion and his widely popular fan zine, that Mayhem constructs their image to affirm their desired ascription of being a violent, repulsive authenticity. As Peterson (2005) contends, "If authenticity is constructed and subject to continual change, then it clearly takes an effort to appear authentic. Such 'authenticity work' can take a number of forms" (p. 1086). In Mayhem's case, Euronymous and the band desperately wanted to stand out from other metal bands at the time.

To this, I contend that the band relies on not only being presented and presenting themselves as repulsive and violent in the media but that violence and repulsiveness are fused into their early music as well. For this next section, I will discuss Mayhem's presentation in local media that represents before, during, and after the release of

"Deathcrush," primarily through Metalion's zine, *Slayer*. *Slayer* served a major platform for Mayhem and their goal to gain the ascription as authentic through setting up Mayhem as an evil, repulsive, and violent force which propelled them to the forefront of black metal's development.

Thankfully, other work has been done on Mayhem and their Norwegian scene considering their notoriety, especially within metal music. Jesse McWilliams (2018) addresses Mayhem from a more epistemological approach citing major themes such as the requirements of darkness, pessimism, misanthropy, and irony. Within the ideological assessment, I demonstrate how through the use of fan zines, interviews, and fan zines they assert this darker, more violent image.

Figure 3

Ideological Assessment

Zines and Repulsive Authenticity

I will begin this section with a brief introduction of how to define and classify Mayhem's authenticity and the importance of Metalion's fan zine as a medium. Recalling back to Kahn-Harris (2019) and the metal identity triad, it is important to remember that identity demographics play a huge role in ascription of authenticity, especially within metal. The main identities being white, male, and heteronormative, however, typically from working class backgrounds. While Mayhem certainly fits into this category, the challenge is what makes the band different from those appearing at the time.

Compounded by their geographical distance and isolation from the epicenters of metal in Europe and the United States, Mayhem had to find a way onto the global scene and stand out. Mayhem sought to appeal to these identity dynamics in an exaggerated and intense way. Some of these aspects, as previously mentioned, are extreme lyrics, diabolic or violent imagery, and virtuosity which while rejecting societal norms, act as markers for metal fans (Walser, 2014; Farley, 2009). By engaging in these various aspects, Mayhem recenters black metal's focus on these aspects as needed to be perceived as authentic.

Typically, these traits result in using more lewd language and behavior as signs of authentic work to achieve the ascription of being authentic. This behavior can be considered as more repulsive authentic work, where the use of more heteronormative, pornographic imagery or language gains ascription as authentic (Neville-Shepard & Neville-Shepard, 2020). Considering the audience is perceived to be predominantly heteronormative males according to ci (2016), these acts can work just as effectively as

the battle between Satan and Earth. This is often seen with bands such as Venom and Mötley Crüe, where although Satanic imagery is used, it mostly relies on masculine imagery of sex, drugs, and rock n' roll.

The localized and isolated scene was especially important for the second wave of black metal and other subgenres of 'extreme' metal. To note, extreme metal is a reference mainly to proto-black and death metal bands such as Venom and Sarcófago. This scene was often called, "the Underground," a decentralized and diverse scene of bands and fans that existed primarily outside of the Anglo-American 'core' of heavy metal that existed at the time (Harris, 2000). While often considered virtually invisible to most metal fans and the market, it was insulated, and sometimes provoked moral panics. One of the most notable underground scenes spawned the second wave of black metal.

The second wave of black metal itself, with Mayhem at the helm pulls heavily from this 'Underground' from its punk influences, insular nature, and less market influence. Due to their isolation, Mayhem, and the early part of the second wave were heavily reliant on a do-it-yourself (DIY) culture that is typically demonstrated by local punk scenes. Mayhem and the early Norwegian black metal acts aligned more on the ideological aspects of punk as well. According to Vannini et al. (2009), "Three tenets of punk ideology emerged during data analysis—tenets that we have termed "rejection," "reflexivity" and "self-actualization'" (p. 69). These three tenets can be seen in the rhetoric of Mayhem as they attempt to craft a new doctrine for the second wave of black metal to follow. Although these tents are seen in the first wave, with bands such as Venom, it is ultimately amplified by Mayhem in these early stages.

To demonstrate this amplification, I want to stress the importance of Mayhem's appearance construction that takes place in the DIY *Slayer Mag* by Metalion. As previously mentioned, Mayhem and Metalion all developed a friendship in the early part of their career. In the 1980s and 1990s, it was incredibly important to not only appear in these zines, but also be from familiar (or not so familiar) locations when constructing your band's image (Gordon, 2014; Jones, 2019; Wheaton & Beal, 2003). This was one of the most predominant ways of being ascribed as a real metal or punk act and gaining fans. Even for bands such as Metallica, Slayer, and Mercyful Fate it was very important to have regular issues and interviews in your scene's fan zines. In "Scissors and Glue: Punk Fanzines and the Creation of DIY Aesthetic," Teal Trigg (2006) writes, "As cultural mouthpieces for punk bands, fanzines disseminated information about gig schedules, interviews with bands and reviews of new albums alongside features on current political events and personal rants" (p. 70). For Metalion's *Slayer,* it is a cultural hallmark for many of the early second wave black metal bands, including other forms of extreme metal.

The first appearance of Mayhem in Metalion's fan zine is in 1986 in issue ¾, where there is a brief introduction of their sound and members. I am going to demonstrate how early on, before "Deathcrush" was even recorded, Mayhem was doing authenticity work to enhance their image. On the cover of this zine, you can see the *Slayer* cover featuring a person surrounded by a pentagram and candles followed by the words "thrash metal attack. (Kristiaensen, p. 50, 2015). Throughout the issue it covers very specific bands, including an interview with the band Slayer, who were well known for their full

embrace of the Satanic turn as well. However, like many bands, Slayer's embrace of Satanic imagery and lyrics is often so extreme it is forgotten that it is more theatrical.

Moving to the introduction of Mayhem's first feature in the magazine. Kristiaensen (2015) translates what is written as,

> "Somewhere in Norway there is a barn. In this barn there is a pigsty. And in this pigsty is MAYHEM has their rehearsal space. And what is MAYHEM? Well, it is something as rare as a TOTAL DEATH METAL group! AAARRRGGGHHHH! That is such a raw and good band exists in Norway is totally incredible! Did you think SODOM was fast? Bah, that's nothing compared to MAYHEM. Because these black souls play fast, fast, F A S T!!!!! Holy shit, they are good! (Oh yezz!)" (p. 64).

The words written by Metalion are interesting as how he is trying to hype up the band as something is faster and deadlier than other bands that people would know. In this one paragraph there is a variety of authenticity work being done. The most predominant form is through Mayhem's group membership, as well as their roots being from Norway. Peterson (2005) asserts that, while authenticity is often attributed through group membership or identity, its construction can often be elastic. This also feeds into authenticity through status identity, where it feeds into more of your socio-economic status as an artist rather than something broader. These various aspects can be seen as Metalion is trying to associate Mayhem with something more grim, dark, faster, and heavier than all other bands. Even the language itself is similar to McWilliams' argument concerning the presence of misanthropy, where there is often a glorification of topics such as death, war, and darkness (p. 32, 2018).

Compared to Mercyful Fate, Metalion also attempts to associate these traits with being a Scandinavian, specifically Norwegian band, something that until now has not

typically been heard of considering their isolation from the mainstream of metal in Northern Europe. Often when discussing Mercyful Fate, their nationality and ethnic backgrounds are left last due to their notoriety. However, there is also the aspect of them being in a barn, or a 'pigsty' as though they are animals that play 'TOTAL DEATH METAL' this attribution of them being animalistic and deadly is also work that is being done in a strange way. Rather than make them appear as domineering strongmen or mysterious types, Metalion describes them in a radically different way. In this paragraph, it is reliant on hyping up their image rather than a discussion of the music itself.

About a year later in the summer of 1987 Mayhem finally released "Deathcrush" with the assistance of the local scene, Metalion included. In fact, Euronymous made a note of dedicating the record to Metalion and his work. Kristiaensen (2015) writes, "When I received my box of records, I discovered that *Deathcrush* was dedicated to me," he continues, "I liked that a lot. I think Euronymous did that because I lent him money. I loved having the album so much, because Mayhem were my friend" (p. 71). Upon releasing "Deathcrush," the band put together enough money and printed only 1,000 copies which were sold alongside *Slayer Mag* Issue 5. What is significant about this zine is that it contains Metalion's review of the record and positions Mayhem as well. Alongside this, upon both releases Mayhem went on a disastrous tour in Northern Europe and Turkey (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003). Regardless, this issue is significant for the release of their first album!

While Deathcrush is not their released music, it was the first to make the rounds and become an successful endeavor. Mayhem officially had music out that was

purchasable and of enough quality to listen to. Their previous release was a very lo-fi, rough demo tape containing several songs from “Deathcrush” labeled “Pure Fuckin’ Armageddon,” however the tape was only released in very limited number, and worse quality. With “Deathcrush,” there is something to now promote and review within *Slayer* and other zines. Kristiaensen (2015) writes, “As you now they released the goriest demo ever called “Pure Fuckin’ Armageddon”! This demo is a “classic” which is mentioned in the same breath as the early POISON demos and the HELLHAMMER demos” (p. 112). This introduction to the review is important for setting up Mayhem as authentic similarly to the previous example. It mainly deals with their identity and status within the metal as a broader category. While the demo itself is not as widely available or listenable, what is important is how he compares it to other “classic” demos by early first wave black metal bands such as Poison and Hellhammer. Pulling from Moore (2002), Mayhem is granted a label of *third-person authenticity*, which can also be called the authenticity of execution. As stated in the previous chapter, third-person authenticity is typically shown as you accurately represent the ideas of others, embedded in what we can consider “traditional” performances. Due to the underground, aligning your music to the quality and production of previous bands can be considered significant to being perceived as authentic. Primarily, this can be an example of Mayhem being a band that goes back to their ‘roots.’

Of course, Metalion continues to describe the “Deathcrush” alongside some photos of the band as well. Often going back to more violent depictions, Kristiaensen (2015) writes, “The new MAYHEM trax is so incredible good! Real hellscapes Death Metal! Their music is like a razor blade ripping you up from the inside!!” (p. 112).

Interestingly, Metalion continues to use more violent, misanthropic language in order to give a sonic description of Mayhem's new record. The phrase, "Real hellscapes Death Metal!" it stands out to again evoke where their genre status and identity exists within the global scene of metal music. By depicting it as sounding "real" it implies that there is in a sense, a sound that is fake. Following this phrase is of course, the idea that the music itself is violent, "...a razor blade ripping you from the inside!!!" (p. 112). Of course this phrasing is meant to elicit how one might feel upon listening to the record and using the more violent and vivid language as positive adjectives for a metal record.

Wrapping up Metalion goes on to describe each song and briefly the process of recording the record itself. However, the most important section is him stating that the record was not recorded by a label, but rather by the band itself with their own label. At the time, this was Posercorpse Music, formed by Euronymous would later be called Deathlike Silence (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003; (Kristiansen & Warrior, 2015). This is important for the previously mentioned punk ideological aspects, as the creation of your own label indicates a rejection, reflexivity, and self-actualization of the band and scene. By rejecting major or minor labels, it is a rejection of market participation and gives the band more liberty to pursue their projects. However, this also limits them on options regarding funding. Mayhem itself was funded mainly by its members holding jobs, welfare checks, and living in poverty (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003; Kristiaensen & Warrior, 2015). Regardless, this form of dedication hints back to the importance of reflexivity and self-actualization mentioned by Vannini et al. (2009), as it brings up the

debate between being and doing. By accomplishing this Mayhem reinforces their image as authentic via not "selling out" and being.

I am going to discuss one final zine and its review of "Deathcrush" before moving onto the next section where I will address various lyrics from the album. The next zine is also Norwegian labeled "Damage Inc. #1" also released in 1987. Interestingly, there is a discussion of the recording process and vocalist status of Mayhem. The recording of "Deathcrush" occurs after Eirik Norheim, also known as Messiah, departs from the band where Sven Erik Kristiansen, known as Manic, joins in his place. What stands out is that the zine itself is mainly written by Maniac while his fellow editor, Kyorpon, interviews him about Mayhem's recording. While this is the beginning of the band and album review, it moves onto more sonic descriptions of the record. In Damage Inc. (1987), Kyorpon writes, "I've heard the true Mayhem in rehearsal, and I've got to say that this demo has got to be one of 1987's best, if not THE best," he continues, "Mayhem has always been black, fast and perverse, but Maniac's voice lends a new dimension to the music" (p. 9). This high praise is significant as it is stating how good "Deathcrush" is in order to be the best and its association to the band sounding, "black, fast and perverse". As again, traits of being fast, perverse, harsh, or dark have typically been associated with being positive for extreme metal bands. Kyorpon (1987) moves on to described Maniac's voice, "He doesn't have a traditional low, dark and heavy voice," he continues, "On the contrary, it's a cross between an F-16 on full afterburner, and a chainsaw cutting sheet metal" (p. 9). This page and review is full of description of Maniac's voice as being something that is "horror-making" and metal sounding, however, not within the

traditional means of low and dark. While this can indicate that Mayhem has defied traditional metal performance, by featuring a dark and lower voice, the use of a higher pitch has been dubbed by Kyorpon here as a net positive.

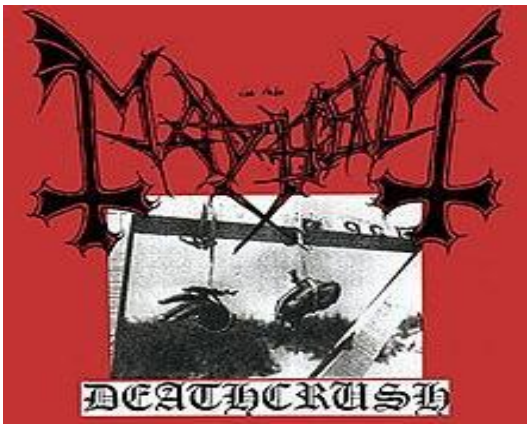
As seen in the zines, there is an abundance of description of the band and their sound that indicates them as authentic, new, and even groundbreaking. However, many of the descriptors for Mayhem rely on associating them with various different appearances, sounds, and other artists as well. Often, Mayhem has been indicated that they are unique, yet different.

Packaging

In the discussion of this record, there needs to be a discussion of the packaging and its DIY nature. "Deathcrush" as a record is painted in a blood red color, with Mayhem's name and iconic font strewed across the top. In the center of the cover, it displays a black-and-white image of two severed hands hanging on a rope for all to see. Packaging in this context can be quite important, as compared to Mercyful Fate, this cover was very hastily made due to funding and desire for shock value.

As previously mentioned, there were only 1,000 original copies made at the time of the record's release. Funnily enough, a prominent reason for the record's slow release and hastily made nature was due to Euronymous being the sole controller over the band's production, on top of their financial troubles it made for a surprising release (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003). On top of this are two main incidents regarding the record's printing. Firstly, the blood red color came out in a very bright pink and was missing various letterings including Euronymous' name. This resulted in Euronymous going through each

of the 1,000 records and handwriting his name on to each of them (Kristiaensen & Warrior, 2015).



The second and most important aspect of the album is the prominent image of the severed hands in the cover photo (see Figure 4). In Patterson's interview with Necrobutcher, the hands themselves are a picture from a Mauritanian marketplace, along the Ivory Coast of Africa. However, upon sending the record to the printing company, there was an uproar about the photo being racist imagery, as the hands are black skinned. In the interview, Necrobutcher states, "We actually never thought about it, we were like, 'Racist? What the fuck? It is just two hands,'" he continues, "We didn't think about what color the hands were, it was just so fucking cool" (Patterson, 2013, p. 136). This piece of information about the origin of the hands image is interesting as it helps expand the mindset of Mayhem at the time. Fitting into triad of white, heteronormative, and male their dismissal of race was a telling aspect of white, male, European privilege. The dismissal also serves to reinforce that their embrace of a violence, misanthropic, ironic, and repulsive attitude supersedes all other cultural concerns. Theirs is a violent nihilism that rejects sympathy, sensitivity, or concern for others, at least not for others who do not share their authentic identity.

In the same interview, Necrobutcher explains why they picked the photo, "We had an idea to find the picture that could defined the music," continues Necrobutcher,

"First I went to the torture archive to see if there were any cool torture pictures. I did not find that, so I went into some other places, then that picture popped out. We thought it was a humorous thing as well, bizarre things going on, this defines the music pretty well" (Patterson, 2013, p. 136). While very DIY in nature, what sets this imagery apart from its punk contemporaries is that it is ultimately met with humor and shock rather than as resistive. Interestingly, Necrobutcher and his bandmates are much more aloof to the idea that this can be perceived as racist by using the dismembered Black body, but see the photo as an image to describe the music within the record. The critique here is mainly of the lack of care shown and its hastily, shocking nature during the printing of the record that makes original copies highly sought after.

The self-production of the record itself under Posercorpse Music itself is significant as previously mentioned as Mayhem goes against the grain of the market. It is important to note the effort, or lack thereof in putting together this record compared to Mercyful Fate's which contains more Satanic, however, extremely aesthetic, and artistic choices as it is a painting. When moving onto my next section, their attitudes will remain familiar. This is what I will focus on in the next two sections where I will discuss the lyrical and sonic aspects of "Deathcrush." As the importance of violence and shock permeate throughout this development.

Lyrical Analysis

Building upon the ideological assessment, I will move on to the lyrical analysis. In this section of the chapter, I will delve into the lyrics and how Mayhem constructs their image within the selected tracks. To reiterate my brief warning, there is a discussion

of violence, sexual assault, and other acts that can be overwhelming. Of course, this was the goal of the band, it is important to recognize its existence before beginning.

As mentioned previously, Mayhem developed “Deathcrush” in 1987 through Euronymous’ new label, Posercorpse Music. Considering the failure of their previous demo release, *Pure-Fucking-Armageddon*, Mayhem had a lot on their plate to fix the situation. Most of the band had by this point, dropped out of school and work in order to practice and record. On top of this, Euronymous was dedicated to his vision of pushing the boundaries of metal and his ideology of evil, terror, and sorrow.

Interestingly, despite being considered the Godfather of black Metal, and the brains of the band, Euronymous was not the song writer. Even with his perfectionist tendencies, it was ultimately Necrobutcher who took up the role of song writer, especially the lyrics (Patterson, 2013; Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003). As in the previous chapter, I will discuss how the lyrics to the selected tracks reinforce the band’s ideology as well as how it fits into the discussion of authenticity. Specifically for Mayhem, however, I would like to focus on the more graphic depictions of violence within the lyrics as compared to Mercyful Fate.

“Necrolust”

The first track I am going to analyze is the track, “Necrolust” written by Necrobutcher. Unlike the Mercyful Fate tracks, placing it within the classifications provided by Moore and Peterson is a little more difficult due to how the lyrics are written. While arguably fitting within Moore’s first- and third- person authenticity, I am

more interested in how it questions the authenticity of possible listeners. The lyrics to the song goes as follows:

Your stinking corpse I desire
Nothing can take me higher
Fucking you till your bones break
Another one has to die

Cum dripping from my dick
Fucking you to the core
Can't take this anymore
My brain is driving me insane

Necrolust
Eating the flesh of a thousand corpses
Bloodsucking cuntless nuns
Her guts were boiling out of her butt
Eating her slimey cunt as I hold her tits

Come posercorpse and die again! (“Deathcrush,” 1987)

While shocking, this is a good representation of Mayhem’s early songwriting, full of morbid and grotesque lines and imagery. The lyrics are filled with references to sexual assault, necrophilia, murder, and more transcending the songwriting that you would see with Black Sabbath. While these more violent lyrics are typical for the lower extreme metal bands, it is miles away from the first wave of black metal, especially Mercyful Fate.

For this analysis I am mainly going to address how the lyrics of “Necrolust” fit into the mold of presenting a more repulsive and violent authenticity, and the ways in which it labels others as non-authentic. Again, drawing from Ryan and Meredith Neville-Shepard (2020), through the use of more taboo, lewd, and even violent language, a popular figure which grants them the label as being more authentic. However, while

definitely containing more taboo language and descriptions, it goes into vivid and violent detail. When Maniac screams, “Fucking you to the core, can’t take this anymore, My brain is driving me insane” it is far removed from traditional heavy metal acts before them. In terms of authenticity, Mayhem fits into two possible categories presented by Moore. I argue that these lyrics broadly fit into first- and second-person authenticity. Mainly as the lyrics describe acts and feelings of the vocalist, it feeds into the possible audience as well. By way of screaming truth to power, it gives violent and graphic detail as to how one feels and how one should act.

This “truth” is, of course, deeply invested in the triad of metal identity, especially heterosexual masculinity. The song revels in shocking misogynistic violence that violates broader cultural norms around sexual behavior. The song seems less about sexual desire than a violent urge to violate and annihilate the objects of this violent assault. That the abused female subject of the narrative is also framed as a corpse and as a nun adds the song’s depiction of violence, which occurs on at least three key levels. On the surface, it is a song about violent assault with bone’s breaking and destruction of bodily integrity. On a second level, its violence violates a broad cultural prohibition against sexual assault and violence. On a third level, the inclusion of the image of the nun, reinforces the band’s violence against established morals from the Christian religion.

The levels of intense and graphic violence are offered as evidence of Mayhem’s authenticity since, in the song’s final lines, the victim of the assault is framed as a poser, an inauthentic individual. In the song, the victim up until the last verse is seen through the use of feminine pronouns, arguably depicting violence against a woman. It all comes to a

head as the song finishes with, “Come posercorpse and die again!.” The important piece here is the labeling of the imaginary victim as a “posercorpse” as it serves two purposes. Firstly, it is the namesake of Euronymous’ label, Posercorpse Music, as previously mentioned that was used to produce the “Deathcrush” record. However, this deeming of the imaginary victim as a posercorpse, and describing the various acts of violence upon this body is important as it dictates that feminine bodies can be seen as non-authentic, non-metal. The term, ‘poser,’ itself is widely used throughout metal and punk, typically used to call someone out as being ‘inauthentic’ typically due to attire or action. And the weaponization of the term poser, here is referencing them as being feminine and subject to brutal violence. The labeling and removal of status as authentic by being called a posercorpse, within the realm of this song, is equal to a violent outcome and thereby denied life.

“Deathcrush”

This next track I am going to discuss is the namesake of the record. “Deathcrush” is roughly 3 minutes and 3 seconds long and mainly contains violent lyrics and acts of murder. Similarly, to the previous track, it is simplistic structurally, but still extremely vivid in detail. The lyrics go as follows:

Demonic laughter your cremation
Your lungs gasp for air but are filled with blood
A sudden crack as I crushed your skull

The remind of your life flashes by
A life that soon won't be
Smiling with axe in my hand
Evil's rotten hand you'll see

I come forward
Deathcrush
I'll send you to your maker
I'll send you to your death

Death nicely crucified
Death, heads on stakes

The barbeque has just begun
Deathcrush (x3)

Crush - Crush
Deathcrush (x3) (“Deathcrush,” 1987)

Of course, these lyrics do not contain sexualized violence or more lewd language, however, they do contain an important focus on violence. A common feature throughout the record, this first song sets the tone as it lays out the murder of the victim. While the phrase, “deathcrush” doesn’t have a real meaning it can be seen in the song as the lyrics describe the crushing of the victim’s skull by the vocalist.

On its face, these two selected songs are wildly different from those produced by Mercyful Fate. Not only in language and tone, however, they also take up a different mantel and style. In tracks like “The Oath,” they are mainly serving the purpose of propping up King Diamond as an authentic figure, by living out his truth as a Satanist. His performance of evil is theatrical much like the media sensationalism discussing the dangers of it. For Mayhem, this is a much rawer form of expression, especially that of anger. I argue that the way this is presented lyrically is as an authentic expression of anger and alienation through lyrical violence.

The victims in the tracks “Deathcrush,” “Chainsaw Gutfuck,” and “Necrolust” are representations of something Mayhem and the early second wave of black metal is

fighting against. Rather than simply opposing Christianity in a theatrical sense like King Diamond, Mayhem goes for the throat claiming that posers, trends, and those who stand in the way need to be violently disposed of. If this sounds evil or repulsive, that is the very point. As Moynihan and Søderlind (2003) point out, Mayhem under Euronymous' leadership is to be the most extreme and violent band in an otherwise conservative landscape. Through lyrical violence, Mayhem is trying to weed out those who might not fit in. In other words, by using violent and repulsive lyrics it attracts the fans that are considered, 'trv' fans.

This can be seen in shows that are preferred in the late 1990s, one of the few shows that Mayhem actually performed. In 1990, Mayhem played one of their first and infamous shows where Euronymous attempted to make it as extreme as possible. In interviews with Bård Guldvik "Faust" Eithun, formerly the drummer of Emperor, and Metalion, both explain that the band had purchased spoiled pigs heads to be displayed at the show. This takes place when Dead replaces Maniac as the band's vocalist, which while both were known for being unpredictable, Dead proceeded to cut his arms in order to toss blood onto the audience (Moynihan &Søderlind, 2003; Kristiansen & Warrior, 2015). Of course, this is considered one of the main moments where the band attempted to weed out those who were considered posers.

In the next section, I'll demonstrate the influence of "violence" on Mayhem's sound and style via a sonic analysis. Similar to the previous chapter, I will go through a selected song's sonic, and musical make up to demonstrate how it constructs the band as an authentic force, and influences the genre.

Sonic Analysis

This sonic analysis will be pulling heavily from the previous chapter's analysis in demonstrating the evolution or devolution that takes place between the first and second waves of black metal. I will also be demonstrating how this can be considered 'violent' compared to the previous record and how "Deathcrush" permanently changes the subgenre and culture with it.

Going back to the checklist by Tagg (2015) I want to address several different items mentioned, in particular, aspects such as tone and distortion will be prominent in this analysis. I will also be alluding to the previous record to open a discussion in order to compare and contrast both bands. In this section, I will be selecting a couple songs to discuss and how Mayhem creates a new soundscape that defines black metal in the second wave. My song selection goes as follows: "Silvester Anfang" and "(Weird) Manheim/Pure Fucking Armageddon." Of course, each song on the record has its own characteristics, aspects, and history. These two however, will be used to demonstrate the importance of black metal's tonal shift and increased 'violence.'

Song Length

Before I begin a deeper analysis of each song's sonic qualities, there needs to be a discussion about the difference in song length and general quality between the records. At a whopping 17 minutes and 28 seconds, "Deathcrush" is rather short compared to "Don't Break the Oath" which is 47 minutes and 30 seconds. This gains a mark of authenticity as

they do not go through a fancy record label. While many bands have had shorter records, especially within punk, it is interesting to start seeing records in black metal that have shorter song length. Having shorter song length is typically displayed by punk and early thrash bands, as many focused-on speed and power rather than their virtuosity. However, on the other side, there is a heavier emphasis on song complexity and virtuosity of the artists in metal that typically leads to long song times (Christe, 2003; O'Neill, 2017; Walser, 1993). By recording and producing the record themselves, through Euronymous' Posercorpse Music, Mayhem earns a degree of early authentic construction that is occurring as they are going through more DIY production methods, which can be argued as a more "traditional" form of music production for metal and punk.

Especially when considering Mayhem originates from an isolated scene, the act of self-production acts as a method of scene creation. Arguably, without Mayhem, the second wave of black metal that is birthed out of Norway would have never occurred. This is interesting while many bands in heavy metal have dealt with the early process of struggling to find and record their music, many bands by 1987 have already been recruited into the ranks of major and minor record labels in Western Europe and the United States. Most notably, Mercyful Fate being a part of the early Roadrunner Records, formed in 1980.

I suggest that while the environment forced them to become creative with the means to record, they also made conscious decisions in terms of overall sound quality and song length, as the DIY route of recording gives certain advantages and disadvantages. As Moynihan and Søderlind (2003) point out, the members of Mayhem

lived in an extended state of poverty throughout the late 1980s and their height in the early 1990s. This struggle can be seen in O'Neill's discussion of the late 1980s-1990s Brazilian extreme metal scene that the very raw cuts of the self-produced records give bands like Sacrofago a cult-like status in the extreme and black metal worlds. However, the struggle between bands such as Sacrofago and Mayhem stretched as our Norwegian teens lived in a rather healthy social democratic system with a robust welfare system versus the trials and tribulations living in the Global South (Moynihan & Søderlind, 2003; Hagen, 2020). Regardless, the recording of "Deathcrush" was entirely funded by the band and various other contributors. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Metallion himself, being one of the many donations and funders of the project, was given acknowledgements on the record's print (Kristiansen & Warrior, 2015). Ultimately, as 1,000 original copies were made, it is important to understand that sound length could very possibly be based on a mix of funding and conscious decision as to presentation of the band.

Sound Quality and Dissonance

An important factor and difference between Mayhem and Mercyful Fate would be the amount of dissonance and sound quality that can be seen between both bands. Mayhem as a band drew more experience from bands such as Venom, Discharge, and Bathory. Many of the tracks on this record are very raw and rely on dissonance and distortion. I argue that these traits are key differences in the authentic work that took place in the production of both records I have analyzed. While Mercyful Fate is a

significant band when discussing its influence on future black metal artists, it is Mayhem that defines the sound of the second wave of black metal.

I argue that while the 'poor' and raw sound quality of "Deathcrush" and its earlier demo were subject to their lack of funding for proper recording and production, that ultimately, this choice of sound is critical authentic work for the band to be perceived as authentic. However, before continuing it is important to define and discuss the importance of dissonance in metal music.

Dissonance

When discussing what dissonance is, it can be defined as a way of describing the result of a variety of aspects, primarily through tone, pitch, and tempo. Essentially, musical dissonance is a means of describing how these various aspects create an environment of tension and conflict. Weinstein (2000) and Berger (1999) both discuss the importance that perceived heaviness and use of dissonance becomes in more extreme metal scenes such as death and black metal, compared to traditional heavy metal. Ultimately, these sounds go against the typical consonance heard in popular music, the elements and sound quality that rings in our ears as stable and complete. According to Herbst and Swallow (2022), "Consequently, music may be structurally consonant but sensorily dissonant, or vice versa, or both structurally and tonally dissonant" (p. 352). This is important when considering the feeling and overall sounds that are produced when making music, and how you may be perceived by the listener.

In terms of extreme metal, and most importantly the second wave of black metal, it is essential to understand the importance that dissonance plays in their overall image.

Rather than lean into musically consonant music, there is a push to make things more dissonant as a way of being perceived as truly ‘metal.’ Going back to earlier in the chapter, Mayhem’s “Deathcrush” is described as something raw, and like “a chainsaw” these adjectives to describe the dissonance act more as compliments rather than complaints to metalheads that began listening. This is because as Swallow and Herbst (2022) argue, as dissonance is used musically to create an atmosphere of anger and aggression; it also acts as a means of supporting metal’s sociocultural values of rejecting mainstream values. One of these values being music must be stable, complete, or even in a major key. Rather, bands such as Mayhem and Mercyful Fate lean into dissonant musical aspects such as minor keys, higher tempos, and an overwhelming amount of guitar distortion. I argue, with the support of Walser (1993), leaning into dissonance, complex patterns, and speeds is an aid to being perceived as a virtuoso while at the same time appealing to the traditional ways of early punk and metal music.

For black metal, as will be discussed in this section, dissonance is important to emphasize the aggression heard in the lyrics and overall sound. To live up to the label of ‘TOTAL DEATH METAL,’ Mayhem sets the tone for other black metal bands that to live up to the aesthetic of chaos and evil, it needs to be heard as such. As seen in Hagen’s analysis of Darkthrone, the second wave of black metal is defined by certain rhythms, chords, and tones through the use of minor chords, extremely fast blast beats and double bass, finished with tempo changes throughout. Even fitting into black metal’s ideological outlook, it is important to be perceived as an evil, raw which the gateway to this is through dealing with sounds and lyrics describing darkness, death, and the occult.

Compared to Mercyful Fate, Mayhem with the influence of Venom leans into this more through their punk influences rather than through their traditional heavy metal influences. Trading their clean virtuosity for a more aggressive sound and even harsher lyrics. In the following I will discuss how Mayhem sets a dissonant soundscape through the two songs selected.

“Silvester Anfang”

I would like to begin this portion of the analysis by starting with the beginning of the record as a whole. The track, “Silvester Anfang,” was not written or recorded by the band and is not very metal sounding either. Written and recorded by Conrad Schnitzler, “Silvester Anfang” is an eerie electronic piece that starts out with a marching pace on various drums that play in various tones, scales, and speeds. The importance of this is in its story, on a trip to Germany, Euronymous found the address and allegedly sat outside the Schnitzler home until finally being allowed an audience, where he requested the piece to be recorded (Patterson, 2015, p. 135). Somehow, this track made it onto the record.

Sonically, it is very different from the rest of the record as it is mainly of electronic drum sounds that progressively get higher pitched and faster. In terms of dissonance, it fits as the marching pace of the low toms progressively gets faster and the introduction of other drums and sounds as well. The track’s existence within this record is simply strange to say the least. Sonically, the track may serve to disorient the listener and to suggest a journey from the past into something new, something unexpected.

“(Weird) Manheim/Pure Fucking Armageddon”

This selection is the final track that is recorded and placed on the album; however, it contains two songs. At 2:57, "(Weird) Manheim is an eerie piano instrumental recorded by the band's then drummer, Manheim, which goes for about 48 seconds. Sonically, the piano piece contains a lot of reverb, the piano itself even sounding out of tune as Manheim plays a lamenting tune. To an extent, the piano instrumental is like "The Oath" as it gives this dissonant and otherworldly feeling to this track as Manheim plays this sad parlor tune.

However, once Manheim's piano section ends it goes straight into the track, "Pure Fucking Armageddon," which was the namesake of the bands previous demo release. Going for about 2:02, the song itself is not listed on the back of the record, instead just labeled as "(Weird) Manheim." Regardless, despite being labeled as weird, the existence of piano or keyboard is not odd for black metal. As seen in the previous chapter, Mercyful Fate themselves deploy the use of organ and keyboard in tracks such as "The Oath" and "Come to the Sabbath" as well.

The song lurches forward with fast and loud blast beats and the chainsaw-like guitar riffs. This transference from the slow, lamenting piano into a brutal punch of the drums is immediate. Like Hagen's analysis of Darkthrone, much of the track is split into two or three sections in regard to rhythms. Typically, there is a verse or two that contains more Venom and Discharge inspired rhythms that pull from more punk influences, relying more on groove or speed. However, Mayhem immediately transitions into blast beats and double bass that due to the distortion and speed sonically fall on top of each other. Although sounding sloppy, can be considered a mark of virtuosity.

I argue again that these choices are markers of authentic work, as rather than being clean or acceptable, Mayhem argues there needs to be a devolution in sound quality, and an embrace of dissonance. Unlike Mercyful Fate, rather than focus on a catchy beat or rhythms seen in their traditional metal roots, they go back to the grittiness found in Venom and punk acts. Mayhem focuses on speed and aggression to present their angry, total death vision instead of relying on sonically 'good' musical production and virtuosity. Compared to their predecessors, Mayhem sounds much more like people screaming and playing as fast and hard as they can. This is essential for proceeding a list of bands to come such as Darkthrone, Immortal and others that come after. In conclusion, this emphasis on extreme dissonance is an effort to sonically create a more extreme soundscape only interested in darkness, death, and despair.

As this chapter ends, I am going to discuss the implications and consequences that spawned after the release of "Deathcrush" and what propelled black metal to the forefront of metal and the media. This will be important for discussing the impacts created by the radical shift in tone before, during, and after 1987 and Mayhem's origin. My main reasoning is that by looking at the events that occur after "Deathcrush" is essential for seeing the shift in black metal's ideological bent from maintaining a theatrical violence to be viewed as authentic into the use of violence to be perceived as authentic.

Implications and Consequences

In this section, I am going to discuss the impacts, implications, and consequences that occur with the introduction of Mayhem and their record, "Deathcrush," to the scene.

I argue that the escalation in violence occurs after the EP's release, over three parts: (1) Pelle Yngve Ohlin being selected as the new vocalist, and his suicide, (2) the Norwegian church burnings, and (3) the murders of Magne Andreassen and Euronymous. Over the course of these three events, it brought Norwegian metal into the media spotlight and solidified this as the image of black metal for years to come.

As a force, the Norwegian black metal scene started out very small, however, with the release of "Deathcrush" it sparked a fire in Oslo. After its release in 1987, you begin to see various bands start to pop up such as, Darkthrone, originally a death metal act, upon listening to Mayhem's release caused them to switch over to black metal (Hagen, 2020). Other important bands are Thorns, Immortal, and Emperor, then later the arrival of Burzum. However, I will stick to Mayhem's story that leads to the violent escalation that occurs in this extreme scene.

"Dead"

Firstly, there is a change of the band's lineup, among the first of the lineup changes is with the drummer, Manheim, a founding member of the band, departing due to creative differences and deciding to work full-time. Due to Euronymous' aspirations to take on a more perfectionist, and ideological path in recording for the next record, it was time to find someone to fill this gap. The individual to fill in on drums would be Jan Axel Blomberg, who would take on the pseudonym, Hellhammer, like the band of the same name (Moynihan &Søderlind, 2003). This is aided by the departing of both former vocalists Messiah and Maniac, both going to start other projects in the scene as they did not fully fit Euronymous' vision. However, this opened the gates for their new vocalist

from Sweden, Pelle Yngve Ohlin, who took up the mantle of 'Dead.' Between 1988-1989, with the arrival of Dead and Hellhammer started the band down the path of notoriety (see Figure 5).

Picking up Dead as the new vocalist of the band is a major milestone when we are discussing the impacts of "Deathcrush" as well as their goals as a band. In his youth, Dead was subject to a variety of trauma ranging from bullying to when he allegedly had a near-death experience. Because of this, many believe this led to his fascination with topics such as death and dying. However, due to this he developed a good relationship with Euronymous as they both began to share and concoct a new vision for the path that black metal should take, especially in Norway.

This was not without its challenges; Dead was Sweden and was formerly in a death metal band named Morbid. Upon sending his tracks to Metalion to pass onto Euronymous, he spoke no Norwegian, and left home without notifying his immediate family about his decision. According to Necrobutcher, "Then Dead came to Oslo, and it turned out he didn't understand what we were saying… people who are Swedish don't always understand the Norwegians and people from Stockholm are the worst" (Patterson, 2013, p. 141). This resulted in the band needing to communicate in English for some time. Dead simply packed his bags and began to live with the band members in their abandoned house that was used as recording space. Due to this isolation and his trauma,

both contributed to him falling into extreme depressive episodes that often resulted in rifts and worry amongst the band. Often, it was alleged that Euronymous and Dead had a falling out at some point in 1990-1991. Regardless, on top of his impressive vocals, Dead acts as a catalyst for the band's notoriety delving into more grim and violent theatrics.

If someone could be described as dedicated to the music and dark theatrics, it would certainly be Dead. Due to his obsession with death, Dead was rumored to have collected dead animals and sniffing their rotten corpses between vocal takes (O'Neill, 2017). On top of this, Dead was one of the original people using corpsepaint, like the style of paints King Diamond uses, Dead used it to accentuate his already ghastly figure. Of course, these all remain non-violent, however, would come to a head at several shows in Norway and Germany. According to various accounts, Dead and Euronymous set up the stage with severed, rotten pig heads that ended up being thrown around in the crowd (Moynihan &Søderlind, 2003; Patterson, 2013). Following this would be Dead's attempts at slitting his own wrists with a dull knife given to him by his bandmates, then later breaking a bottle to do the deed.

Interestingly, Dead added onto other more ideological attitudes that Mayhem was attempting to form. Dead was one of the main advocates for the movement back to more Satanic roots and imagery for black metal. Arguing for its it aesthetically fit them as an opposition and in terms of violence. Of course, this struck chords amongst the band who agreed, as well as other black metal acts in the scene too. Focusing on death, violence, and Satan was essential in this scene to be viewed as truly black metal.

Sadly, due to the grueling recording schedule and Euronymous' perfectionism when it came to recording, the band had little material to promote and few shows to play. This left a majority of the band in abject poverty, only being sustained by Norway's early social welfare system to sustain them. However, for Dead, he was in a new country without friends or family to lean on that led to rifts between him and Euronymous. On Easter weekend, Dead would take his life by slitting his wrists and sustaining a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head with an old shotgun in the house. The first one to see the body was Euronymous, who upon arrival had to break into the house via an upstairs window. However, this is where the story becomes a foundational one for the scene.

After breaking into the upstairs room and finding the body, Euronymous instead of calling the authorities, ran to a store where he bought a disposable camera. Then, returning to the scene took photos which involved him moving the body. Following this, he allegedly took pieces of the skull and called his bandmates about Dead's suicide. Although never charged with tampering with the crime scene, this became the final straw for Necrobutcher, who quit the band that day due to his distaste for Euronymous' lack of care for their friend. Eventually, Metalion and others would discuss this in several zines about memorializing Dead. However, Euronymous took the death of his bandmate as an opportunity. In an with Bård "Faust" Eithun for *Orcustus* fanzine, Euronymous writes,

> "We have declared WAR. Dead died because the trend people have destroyed everything from the old black metal/death metal scene. Today "death" metal is something normal, accepted and FUNNY (argh) and we HATE it. It used to be spikes, chains, leather, and black clothes, and this was the only thing Dead lived for as he hated this world and everything which lives on it" (Moynihan &Søderlind, p. 60, 2003).

This declaration is a serious marker of the attempts at escalation and identity-status formation taken up by Euronymous. In a way, using Dead's death is a means to an end of elevating the scene and making it seem even more extreme. Euronymous expands on this in a long letter, where he states more specifically his issues with the current state of extreme music. He writes, "Dead killed himself because he lived only for the true old black metal scene and lifestyle," he continues, "It means black clothes, spikes, crosses and so on… But today there are only children in jogging suits and skateboards and hardcore moral ideals, they try to look as normal as possible" (Moynihan &Søderlind, p. 60, 2003). Euronymous in turn is declaring war on the fashion and moral trends that arose in this period, extending his critique beyond black and death metal, but also including hardcore music. This is lightyears away from the mindset of individuals like King Diamond, although theatrical, Euronymous instead of beckoning for those to come listen, screams for war against the idea of posers. Rather than speak true to one's own beliefs, such as the Satanic influences on Mercyful Fate, Euronymous' emphasis on authenticity is on the authenticity of others, and the proposition of violence against those who fall into trends.

This metaphorical war against false metal, however, escalates into what the media would consider to be a real one. However, on June 6, 1992, one of the oldest stave churches in Norway, the Fantoft Stave Church, was set ablaze.

Arson

Around the period after Dead's suicide, Kristian Vikernes, now known as Varg, was one of the younger members of Norwegian black metal scene around only 15-17

years old began his relationship with Euronymous. Much like Dead, Vikernes often played off Euronymous' aspirations to make the scene more and more extreme. However, Vikernes had more sinister views on how to accomplish that. While in a local band, Old Funeral, he began to become acquainted with the members of Mayhem and began the foundations for his solo project, Burzum. While his influence in this period of Norwegian black metal is extremely important, due to his stance as an open white supremacist and murderer, I will be limiting his voice in this story.

Regardless, I am going to briefly discuss in this section before concluding with the climax of Norwegian black metal's story. In 1992-1993, there were a series of church arsons, break-ins, and other forms of vandalism committed across the country allegedly committed by "the Black Circle." This group was those who were close to Euronymous, however, despite media attempts at showing them as an organized group, was more of a decentralized group of edgy adolescents and young adults. The church burnings were of medieval stave churches that are built across Norway, primarily out of wood with old Norse carvings. The main culprits of these were suspected to be none other than Euronymous and Vikernes. The main question would be why?

My brief answer to this was the constant pressure to act out their ascribed and inscribed criteria of authenticity, which led to the escalation of violence that resulted in death and destruction. Euronymous created a precedent where he had to continually up the ante of violent language, imagery, and action that Vikernes sought to exploit. In the scene, many of Euronymous' closest friends such as Metalion say that he was one of the largest proponents for Satanic rituals, being 'evil,' and orchestrated the church burnings,

however, a significant amount of the media attention went to Varg, who held several interviews about the burnings (Moynihan &Søderlind, 2003). Whether or not this was a plan devised by the members of the Black Circle is limited at best. During this period in 1992-1993, the war on trends evolved into a war against the status quo and Christianity. Evolving from King Diamond and Bathory, their choice to adopt Satanic and Norse Pagan attitudes fuels the fire for their resistance against the Church. The campaign of church burnings, instigated by Varg Vikernes, occurred throughout the country amounting to at least fifty arsons by 1995 (Moynihan &Søderlind, 2003). However, despite this peak it escalates further into the murders of Magne Andreassen and Euronymous himself.

Murder

In January 1993, an article by *Bergens Tidende*, was released with an anonymous interview with "Count Grishnackh" (Varg Vikernes), who claimed to have participated in all the church burnings to that date and committed a murder in Lillehammer. In the interview, they threatened the journalists that they would be killed if they summoned the police, however, confessing to the burnings and murder, threatening that they would continue. Their reasoning was, ""Our intention is to spread fear and evil." (Moynihan & Søderlind, p. 95-97, 2003). Despite his confession, the Lillehammer murder was not committed by Vikernes, however, by a different member of the Black Circle. Bård "Faust" Eithun, drummer of the band Emperor, on August 21, 1993, killed a gay man, Magne Andreassen, in Lillehammer's Olympic Park. According to Faust, Andreassen propositioned him for sex where they went to a secluded area, where Faust began to stab

him thirty-seven times. Afterwards, Faust would then join Euronymous and Vikernes for a church burning later that day, admitting to the killing. Faust would remain free until 1993 when he would then be arrested and later sentenced to 14 years in prison, only serving nine. While many attribute the murder to violence of the black metal scene, homophobia, and fascistic behaviors, Faust denies these claims to this day. Instead, he claims that it was merely a crime of opportunity spurred by his intense interest in evil, death, and serial killings.

Sadly, this would not be the only murder that would shed lighter onto the world of black metal. On the night of August 10, 1993, Euronymous in his Oslo apartment would be stabbed twenty-three times in the head, neck, and back by Vikernes. He would then escape with the assistance of Snorre 'Blackthorn' Ruch, of the band Thorns, both of whom would be arrested on August 19, 1993, by authorities for murder. This murder was the beginning of the end for the second wave of black metal. Upon his arrest, supporters of Vikernes set two more churches ablaze in protest (Moynihan & Søderlind, p. 141, 2003). The motive itself remains a mystery, the official claims revolve around allegations of Euronymous owing royalty payments to Vikernes, to Vikernes acting in self-defense, alleging that Euronymous was planning to murder him. Regardless, the act was premeditated landing both Blackthorn and Vikernes in prison eventually being released in the early 2000's. Among other reasons for the arrest is the 150 kg of explosives found in the home of Vikernes, supplemented by ammunition that was saved in the attempt to attack the anti-fascist "Blitz House" in Oslo. Kevin Coogan (1999) writes, "After his arrest for murder, the police discovered that he had about 330 pounds of stolen dynamite

in his possession. Vikernes may have felt that he had no choice but to kill Euronymous before bombing Blitz House because “the Communist” would certainly have opposed such an act” (p. 7). The term, “the Communist” would be referring to Euronymous, who was alleged to harbor more leftist views.

It is important to state that there are many scholars and journalists who have often been criticized, rightfully so, of interviewing figures such as Vikernes and Faust rather uncritically. Khan-Harris (2008) suggests that we often have left Faust’s question of possible homophobia during his murder to the wayside after his eventual release. Coogan (1999) as well also critiquing the book Lords of Chaos authors for similar issues regarding how they treat their interviews with Varg and more extreme white nationalists who claim to be a part of the scene. Rather feeding into the media sensationalism, and image distortion of black metal.

Regardless, this murder left a shadow over the Norwegian black metal community for many years. Several years after the murder, Ihsahn of the band Emperor stated, “There’s no discipline in the scene anymore, like earlier on around the shop” (Moynihan &Søderlind, p. 65, 2003). The shop being Helvete, a record store run by Euronymous often considered a meeting ground for the many black metal fans and bands in the area.

Even after the death of Euronymous, Mayhem continues to tour to this day. Black metal itself became a major part of metal more broadly due to its notoriety and trailblazing regarding sound. In a way, echoing back to Hebdige (1997), it has been brought to heel by the cultural control that capitalism takes over other subcultures.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated the various ways in which authenticity is constructed and ascribed via the use of sound and aesthetics. Particularly in black metal, I discussed how often it utilizes images of Satan, violence, and rejection of life that represent their values to craft a sense of identity. Fans are called by this sonic rhetoric to view the artists as offering an authentic expression of their way of life. However, even in a subculture hellbent on chaos and evil it is essential that symbolism and order is at play. According to McWilliams (2018), "Even an art which denies the authenticity of human consciousness is inevitably dependent upon artificial definitions and symbolism" (p. 34). So, even in a subculture that embraces chaos and rebellion, as in black metal, fans are called to conform to the message and attitude and to mimic the performance of the artists. Those who do not embrace the full performance are labeled "posers" and seen as marginal or enemies.

In this thesis, one of the dominant questions is, "What does it mean to be metal?" and in the world of black metal that is culturally constructed within the scenes themselves. Policed and regulated by its members, within the first wave, we saw how it remained theatrical, like a horror movie rather than literal acts of Satanic rituals and murder. The

bands of the first wave, especially Mercyful Fate, identified themselves as believers in Satanism and evil, but this belief was exaggerated in their theatrical performance. Where previous metal bands who had invoked Satan and evil was in their embrace of the evil and professions of Satanic beliefs. Thus, while there was a distinction between their theatrical on-stage performance and their more private lives, the distinction was more one of amplification. On stage or off, King Diamond was understood to be a Satanist. The distance between on-stage and backstage authenticity was all but completely erased on the second wave. Bands like Mayhem professed to embrace their vision of Satanism and evil in both their on-stage performance and in their personal lives and stories soon circulated widely about connections to vandalism, violence, and even murder. This consistency was embedded into their music and sound as well as their image and this violent vision of authenticity soon fed into wider public panic about Satanism in popular music. While many of the allegations brought against them were artificial and out of fear at best, the perception of violence and transgression became a defining aspect of some portions of the black metal community.

My main conclusions are that authenticity, even if the term itself is illusive and culturally constructed, bears a great weight within music subcultures. Rhetorically speaking, the act of constructing oneself as authentic is a particularly important one that affects the way you are perceived, or how you desire to be perceived. Rather than a discussion of an innate, this thesis is meant to demonstrate something that is ascribed. In the attempt to achieve ascription, people went to great lengths, to violence, to achieve it. Returning to Hebdige (1997) and Hodkinson (2002), while the subculture of black metal is alive and

well, many bands began to commercial success due to their notoriety and style. Individuals such as Faust and Necrobutcher both commented in different interviews that after the deaths of Dead and Euronymous, the scene has evolved away from its raw period. Even now, the Norwegian black metal scene has developed a cult following amongst its fans, in Oslo there is a small touring scene centered around it. However, the death of Euronymous deeply affected many of those closest to him, most notably Metalion. According to Metalion, "I truly miss Euronymous. I miss the pre-Helvete era, our friendship prior to the early 90's, when black metal became such a big thing" he continues, "He was my closest friend for a long time, and I have many memories of our incredible times. You do not make many friends like that in a lifetime" (266). As the sensationalism and violence ended, a new chapter in metal began as black metal's edge became subsumed by capital and its own chaos.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown the radical difference between the ghastly, theatrical nature of Mercyful Fate, and the crushing, blitzkrieg nature of Mayhem that has defined black metal for generations. While King Diamond beckoned the listener to a mysterious Satanic ritual, Mayhem beckoned the listener to their brutal demise. Its impact on the world of extreme metal has been just as intense, inspiring fans and bands for years to come. This isn't meant to reduce the actions done by the Norwegian black metal scene to simply violent adolescents, however, it also isn't meant to reduce them to a violent, organized band of Satanic warriors. Rather simply, it was a blaze that roared as loudly and quickly as it was snuffed out.

The effect that this style of music has had on my life has been significant as I am a fan to this day. Regardless of the sensationalism, and the current issue of fascist propaganda trying to enter the scene, I hope to have shed a new light on black metal to show that it can be analyzed, critiqued, and rehabilitated by emphasizing the importance of topics like authenticity, soundscape, and influence of capitalist hegemony on subculture.

In order to do this, I deployed a variety of interdisciplinary approaches, especially as music and sound is relatively new to rhetorical studies. Looking back at my use of the musicological Tagg model, I am going to discuss some of the benefits and limitations of using this model. The model itself is a means to break the barriers often presented when critiquing and analyzing art, to bring together lyrical, sonic, and cultural messages rather than see each as a distinct and separate dimension of music. Bringing these elements together also rescues musical analysis from being divided into separate areas of expertise, each requiring mastery of distinct terminology and concepts. As Tagg (2015) writes, "the analysis of popular music should in no way be considered a job reserved for 'experts' (although I will admit that describing its mechanisms may require some specialist knowledge)" (p. 21). While this model opens the door to music criticism and analysis for fields such as rhetoric, it still requires a significant knowledge of music and the music industry. Of course, the major benefit here is unlocking a new interdisciplinary route for rhetorical scholars to take, however, restricted by the knowledge required to perform it.

While Tagg's model provides a relatively straightforward and simple model of various aspects of music, it may encourage critics to overly simplify a given song or

album into the three separate categories. While engaging music through the lenses of lyric, sonic, and cultural allows us to identify components, it remains important to be able to put these elements back together into a coherent whole. The experience of music, at least most music, is greater than the sum of these parts.

Another limitation to this would be a disagreement between Tagg and rhetorical scholars on the relevance of semiotics in sound studies. While Tagg's model takes up the model of having hermeneutic-semiotic analysis, the world done by Joshua Gunn and other rhetorical scholars prefer to address the affective. Gunn et al. (2013) write, "*Prima facie*, the key difference between ‘‘rhetorical studies’’ and ‘‘sound studies’’ is that sound persists whether or not it has taken on meaning (i.e., whether or not the sonic has been delivered to, by, or with language). Those laboring under the aegis of sound studies do not presume the semiotic, only the affective'" (p. 476). This disagreement, much like the argument between sound as materialism versus cultural object, are topics that still need to be debated and discussed between both rhetorical and musicological scholars. Arguably, this disagreement could also spawn from the lack of music education among rhetorical scholars and others which has forced us to focus on more affective or new materialist perspectives.

While my work attempts to work through this division, I assert that much more debate and discussion will be required. At the same time, my work here has seriously considered the perceived limitations of Tagg, and the requests of other rhetorical scholars. For Tagg, I have managed to not only retrofit his model for the study of more

subcultural styles of music, but also managed to translate musicology to a new field opening doors for more interdisciplinary work in sound studies. Doing this opens the door for Eckstein and Gunn et al., who all suggest rather than simply “remix” rhetorical studies, we open up a new site of inquiry. I argue and demonstrate that by opening the door for musicology we can have a deeper understanding of the relationship between sound and culture that has only been discussed limitedly. By opening this door, my work and position in rhetorical studies is allowed to exist without sacrificing its status within rhetoric.

I hope that by writing this thesis I have renewed the effort into sonic, and musicological study with rhetorical criticism to expand the field and our own knowledge. I also hope that by reading this people can have a deeper understanding of metal and its respective subgenres. Both subculture and sound is something present throughout all this work, and the world around us and is worth studying.

Rest in power Magne Andreassen, Øystein “Euronymous” Aarseth, and Per Yngve "Pelle" Ohlin.

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Vita

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