

**Call for Papers: Metal and the Holocaust**  
(special issue *Metal Music Studies* 2020, ed. Keith Kahn-Harris and Dominic Williams)

Our special issue tackles a well-known but little-studied phenomenon: the importance of Holocaust themes to the metal scene. The Holocaust has often featured as a subject of metal lyrics (from Slayer's 'Angel of Death' on). It has repeatedly been referred to in descriptions of metal's sound (e.g. the 'Heavy Metal Holocaust' of 1981). And it has formed part of accusations and warnings against bands who flirt with and sometimes outright endorse far-right and neo-Nazi politics.

Even with those bands – the vast majority on the scene – who do not engage in such politics, their interest in the Holocaust has frequently been seen as exploitative at best. But many metal lyricists and musicians claim that they are providing a 'history lesson', and many teenagers' first acquaintance with such figures as Josef Mengele and Reinhard Heydrich surely comes from Slayer.

It is high time, therefore, that the tangled relationship of metal and the Holocaust be unpicked and examined. We wish to face up to a difficult and troubling topic, and accept that many of the ways that metal has approached it are not beyond critique. But we are also interested in possibilities that come from its incorporation and embodiment of the Holocaust. What aspects of metal's politics need to be thought through, attended to, challenged? Can metal form a kind of historiography? Metal frequently evokes extreme affects. Does this focus provide a means of testifying to the Shoah that goes beyond the simply propositional or representational? Are such modes of remembrance exportable beyond the bounds of the metal scene, or do they only work within the particular codes and values of this subculture? How do they compare to other forms of 'Holocaust impiety' and other forms of representation?

We seek proposals for articles of 6,000-8,000 words. Final deadline for articles will be **1 December 2019**.

Questions could include but are not limited to the following:

- What part has metal played in transmitting knowledge of or interest in the Holocaust?
- What place does this particular subject have within the subculture? Is it one of many horrors that its fans wish to face up to, or does it have a particular significance for them?
- Can metal provide history lessons?
- How has the understanding and presentation of the Holocaust by metal bands and fans been influenced by:
  - politics (including those of the far right)?
  - religious and anti-religious positions?
  - interest in Nordic and Germanic culture and themes?
- Does metal offer ways of approaching the Holocaust from which other cultural forms can learn, e.g.
  - its tendency to avoid moralising?
  - its concentration on intense feelings rather than contemplation?
- How has the significant history of Jewish involvement in metal culture impacted the scene's responses to the Holocaust?
- How have Israeli metal scenes engaged with the Holocaust?
- Is the approach taken by these forms of music best characterised as 'holocaust impiety'?
- Is it possible to be 'reflexively anti-reflexive' about the Holocaust?

Send abstracts of 150-250 words plus a short bio note to Dominic Williams ([dominic2.williams@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:dominic2.williams@northumbria.ac.uk)) by **6 September 2019**.