

OPENING

I look forward to our correspondence on the subject of music and radical environmentalism/Animal Lib. This is a subject I really love to talk about as music has played an instrumental (no pun intended) role in my development as an activist.

E-mail to the author from Walter Bond, Animal Liberation Front Activist

There are few subjects I love more than this. . . .
Music is much of my life, music certainly played a role in my getting involved with the cause for the preservation of our White people because I felt that a people capable of such greatness as classical music — something unique to the White Race — must surely be preserved.

Letter to the author from Rev. Matthew Hale, Leader of the Creativity Movement

It is hard to imagine that the authors of these two quotations could represent more distant ideological orientations: vegan militancy and sacred white power. Walter Bond's political worldview grants moral equivalency to all sentient beings, providing the justification for his multiple acts of arson committed in the name of animal liberation. Rev. Matthew Hale is the figurehead of a white-power race faith, the Creativity Movement, which asserts white racial supremacy on the basis of natural, "creative" law. Nonetheless, their commonalities are numerous, including present-day incarceration, the self-ascribed denomination of "political prisoner," and the advocacy of violence as a means of political change. They also share a deep love of music. For both, music was a pivotal catalyst in their radicalization and in the ideological reinforcement that motivated them to commit acts of political violence. Such thought-provoking circumstances kindled the impetus for the topics explored in this book.

Radicalism and Music is a comparative study of the music cultures of four diverse radical groups: al-Qa'ida, the racist skinheads, Christian-affiliated radicalism, and eco-animal rights militancy. The intention is to offer an introductory documentation, examination, and interpretation of the varied functions of music within these distinct radical environments.

My interest in the topic of music and radicalism emerged from my previous

scholarship on music and the Iraq War. In-depth interviews with American soldiers and Marines elucidated music's intersection with violence and revealed how music often guided the formation of social bonds, identity, self-expression, and motivation for action. This research gradually led me to explore complex perspectives on Islamic songs, known as *anashid*, and the problematic topic of music in general, in the context of al-Qa'ida culture. Subsequent interactions with experts investigating the topics of terrorism, political violence, and culture inspired a shift in my scholarly focus, giving rise to my present interest in conducting scholarship that contributes to a deeper understanding of how music operates in varied radical cultures. Among those studying radicalism, few have discussed music from an analytic, cultural perspective, so an opportunity exists to contribute research of relevant and applicable value.

The content of *Radicalism and Music* may at once be relevant to the interests of the social scientist and humanist in addition to the musicologist and intellectually curious general reader. For the musicologist, this book explores music cultures about which relatively slight musicological scholarship exists. As the literature and research grow on music's relationship to violence — see, for instance, Kip Pegley and Susan Fast's volume *Music, Politics, and Violence* (2012) or the recently established Music and Violence special-interest group of the Society for Ethnomusicology — my hope is that the book will provide a substantial contribution to this burgeoning subdiscipline. Interpretative lenses emerging from social psychology, communications, criminology, and terrorist and hate-group studies, among others, provide fascinating insights into the music of radical cultures. These frameworks often situate music as a form of extremist propaganda and theorize about the relationship between violence and emotion. When understood within the context of music's emotive power, such theories illuminate the multitudinous ways the sonic art form is intentionally deployed to prey on emotions, often with hateful, violent messages.

For the humanist and social scientist, the book makes a case for the careful examination of music's roles in radical cultures, roles that are not purely theoretical or academic but evidenced by the actions of Arid Uka, Khalid al'Awhali, Wade Page, Anders Breivik, Matthew Hale, members of the Westboro Baptist Church, and Walter Bond. Such cases bring up difficult questions about how those involved in radicalism, and perhaps humanity in general, can be stirred to feel or act under the influence of music. Would Arid Uka have killed U.S. Airmen at the Frankfurt Airport if his iPod did not contain jihad-themed *anashid*? Would Wade Page have murdered six Sikhs at a temple in Wisconsin if not for his deep involvement in racist-skinhead music subculture? Would Anders Breivik have maintained the commitment to carry out the attacks in Oslo if not for his "meditation walks," in which he voraciously consumed the music of the white-racialist singer Saga? Although no one can answer these questions definitively, the research presented here offers a convincing argument for music's transformational impact on the radicalization, reinforcement, and motivation for action of violent political activists.

Implicit in the consideration of these cases is an invitation to cultivate a personal

relationship with music that is carefully self-reflective, critical, and sensitive to the complex ways in which the sonic art form can influence humanity. To exert a “claim of the ideal,” as the playwright Henrik Ibsen might suggest, upon music as an art that always edifies, that is innocent and pure, that is perhaps divine, can be an ill-conceived endeavor. Music may embody these qualities for some, and I have no right or authority to censure anyone for maintaining that music is the glorious harmony of angels. But the fact still remains that “this angelic voice sing[ing] to you from the heavens” was inspiring and motivating someone like Anders Breivik to murder sixty-nine people by firearm, mostly unarmed teenagers. Ultimately, this book is about how music affects us and how the emotional influence of music can trigger violence and circumvent critical reflections of hateful ideology.

The broader fields of terrorist and extremist studies have generally prioritized the tactical, political, economic, and militant activities of radical groups — and with good reason. Yet these groups and their members do not exist within a vacuum; they have a relationship to the culture in which they physically exist as well as a relationship to others within the group of sympathizers, which itself produces a culture. This internal culture provides a valuable perspective from which we can begin to understand how these groups operate, their aims and ideology, and what often motivates them to violence more so than the professed ideology of the group. Music appears central to many of these cultures, and I would argue that the measure of the strength of a radical organization is typically reflected by the degree to which its music culture thrives. Reconsidering the significance of the cultural lives of such groups can provide new, effective avenues for addressing violent radicalism.

Defining radicalism is a problematic task. While the term *radicalism* has been historically synonymous with political left-wing thought and philosophy, its connotation has broadened significantly within contemporary culture to include religious and right-wing ideology, largely due to the recent prevalence of militant Islamism and right-wing militancy. But this widened breadth has introduced terminological challenges in that the labels of *radicalism*, *extremism*, and *terrorism* are often discharged interchangeably to describe these groups, with little or no distinction. The scholarly literature abounds with attempts to concisely elucidate the unifying aspects of ideas and actions that so many find abhorrent and that have proven so difficult to define. For instance, the *Journal of Radicalism Studies*, a periodical first published in 2006, posits *radicalism* “to mean groups who seek revolutionary alternatives to hegemonic social and political institutions and who use violent or non-violent means to resist authority and to bring about change.” Such a definition provides a broad umbrella suitably inviting for a scholarly publication, but its intentional generality lacks the necessary description of qualitative aspects of radical belief systems.

Alternatively, social psychologist Neil Kressel proposes that *extremism* should focus on the destructive impact of beliefs; he positions religious extremism as “an ideology that calls for committing, promotes, or supports purposefully hurtful, violent, or destructive acts towards those who don’t practice their faith or follow

its fundamental beliefs.” Kressel’s definition operates in a like-minded fashion to the aforementioned concept of *radicalism*, albeit in a more nuanced form, and while his understanding could be extended beyond the realm of religious extremism, the concept of purposeful destructive impact is somewhat relative — someone who bombs an abortion clinic might claim to be constructively impacting the lives of the unborn. Criminologist C. Augustus Martin proposes that extremism, the ideological precursor to terrorism, tends to manifest in four common (but not exclusive) categories: intolerance, moral absolutes, broad conclusions, and new language and conspiratorial beliefs. He underscores the idea that extremists often view themselves as idealized “protectors of a truth,” whose style of expression is equally important to the content of their beliefs. Not only is the content of their views extreme, but the manner in which they express it is highly dogmatic and authoritarian.

For most scholars who study these topics, *radicalism* and *extremism* seem to embrace a corresponding set of characteristics, with relatively immaterial differences. Following Martin, we can conceive of these labels similarly as the foundational springboards to *terrorism*, which represents a distinct elevation of violent intent from radicalism and extremism. Yet terrorism itself is a relative branding. In his book *The Terrorism Lectures*, prominent criminologist James J. F. Forest surveys the competing definitions circulating in the literature and notes that anyone studying such groups is spoiled for choice of definitions. The criteria used to cast the more contemptuous and severe designation of *terrorism* regularly fall to the inclinations of the author or are subject to the variances existing among government agencies. The U.S. Department of State, for example, defines *terrorism* slightly differently from the U.S. Department of Justice, focusing on “pre-meditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets” as opposed to “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property . . . in furtherance of political or social objectives.” Another definitional option is supplied by the Global Terrorism Database, which conditions terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation.” Such seemingly miniscule differences, like the inclusion of property by the U.S. Department of Justice or the designation of “threatened . . . illegal force” and economic and religious goals in the Global Terrorism Database’s definition, are profoundly important as the qualification of terrorism impacts the prosecution and sentencing of those charged with committing these crimes. Any number of select definitions would have, indeed, rendered all the groups examined here as terrorists.

The problematic nature of the terrorism label is effectively avoided by employing the term *radical*, and, in fact, group members frequently use this designation to describe themselves. A shorthand for understanding the terminological differences here might be that a terrorist qualifies as a type of extremist or a radical, but not all radicals and extremists commit levels of violence to the extent that they warrant the label *terrorists*. Where the lines of distinction lie and who delineates them is frequently the source of considerable contention. For our purposes, I draw from these ideas and propose radicalism or radical cultures to include

cultures or groups at the fringe or beyond the fringe of historical and societal mainstream values and perspectives, who tend to adopt and express dogmatic and often idealistic racist, superior, intolerant, absolute, hateful, or illegal views and actions in violent or nonviolent forms. While far from perfect, this definition provides a functional platform from which we can forge ahead.

The first four chapters of *Radicalism and Music* explore as case studies each radical group, providing key historical and ideological background to frame the consideration of their respective music cultures. Each of these chapters is prefaced and postscripted by a prelude and postlude, which provide practical examples — some taken from my ethnographic research — of the important roles music plays within radicalism. The trajectory of the book is intended to move from the most obvious and violent group of those considered, al-Qa'ida, through an examination of groups involved in lesser degrees of human-directed violence. This path naturally leads us to the book's closing, a consideration of how the attributes of music's role in radical culture may be reflected in some of the ways music operates on us in mainstream daily life. The first chapter surveys anashid in al-Qa'ida culture. It might be contented that opening this study with al-Qa'ida is risky because, although they are the logical first choice in light of the book's overall trajectory, there is the possibility that one might be implicitly casting the generalization that Islam is inextricably linked to violence. Certainly, this is not my intention. Just as I properly contextualize the subgroups of environmental and animal rights activism oriented toward violence as a small fraction within the overall movement, so too should it be underscored that al-Qa'ida represents the militant fringes of Islam. In fact, most of the groups examined in this study are at the disassociated margins of religion or ideology. The platform of the Westboro Baptist Church, for instance, is not reflective of widely held beliefs within the American Christian community (or any group other than themselves). Thus, it bears keeping in mind that the groups explored here are radical to a large degree because they represent the most contestable and peripheral manifestations of broadly reaching religions or movements.

The first section of chapter 1 addresses the uncertain legal terrain of music in Islam and traces the history and features of the anashid genre, after which I propose that al-Qa'ida's use of jihad-themed anashid represents a cultural strategy of influence intended to legitimize and promote its ideology. The jihad-themed anashid within this strategy carry a distinct potency to recruit, forge social bonds, disseminate and reinforce a message, animate it with emotion, and potentially motivate the listener to action. Although anashid qualify as "poetry with a raised voice," my research suggests, perhaps surprisingly, that the jihad-themed anashid within al-Qa'ida propaganda and circulating among the group's sympathizers more often appeal to a listener's musical rather than textual appetites. Such a circumstance is largely ironic because jurists routinely claim that music must be avoided due to its ability to excite the senses and stir the emotions (particularly as a catalyst for sexual arousal); however, an anashid's ability to arouse emotion, especially toward violence, is precisely what makes it such a valuable tool in propaganda. The chapter concludes with an investigation into the online world of jihad-themed anashid. While the Internet has allowed groups like al-Qa'ida

to disseminate media and anashid with unprecedented scope, virtual reality has caused major problems, particularly among conservative Islamist movements, who are in permanent competition with secular cultural impulses for the attention of young and increasingly Western-exposed Muslim audiences.

Chapter 2 explores the music culture of American racist skinheads. Beginning with a survey of the contemporary white-power movement and situating the racist skinheads within this broad, complex background, I document the evolution of the racist-skinhead movement as a product of music and musical subculture, showing that it was truly music that birthed the American racist skinhead and not the influence of American Far Right racial politics. I then present a historical background to white-power rock, coursing its progress from Skrewdriver through the self-destructive bungles of Resistance Records and Panzerfaust Records. Over the history of white-power culture, music has been effectively proven to recruit, unify fractured scenes, and, perhaps most important, generate revenue. Next, the chapter examines the specific processes of recruitment, social bonding, and expression of violence as a subcultural norm — all of which are enacted through music — in the most prominent racist-skinhead group active today, the Hammerskin Nation.

Chapter 2 closes with two sections considering music outside of the punk, hard-core, and metal genres that so narrowly encompass the sonic preferences of the racist skinheads. Women artists represent a small but increasingly important sector of white-power music and receive their deserved attention in the penultimate section, which outlines the status of women within the whitepower movement in general and traces the influence of racist-skinhead music, particularly Skrewdriver, on female music artists. As illustrated by the Swedish singer Saga, women represent a more potentially mainstream and sexualized image of white-power advocacy. The final section considers the importance of music in the self-programming strategies of Anders Breivik, who intentionally cultivated his ideological commitment to white nationalism so strongly that it would override any natural feelings of empathy toward his potential targets. Saga's music played a key role in the systematic measures he undertook to mute his emotional and empathetic responses before embarking on an ethnocentric, murderous rampage.

Linking the second and third chapters is an interlude, in which I address the music cultures — or distinct lack thereof — of contemporary radical organizations that create race faiths out of white supremacy and unusual interpretations of Christian doctrine. This short, transitional subchapter from white-power to Christian-affiliated radicalism provides a general assessment of the controversial and fiercely debated nature of the Christian religion within the white-power movement. Among the groups discussed are Hale's Creativity Movement and a variety of Christian Identity churches, all of whom view European classical music as emblematic of racial superiority. The notable lack of original music explicates these groups' relatively lesser size and diminished standing within the broader scope of radical organizations.

The third chapter is split between the Westboro Baptist Church and an engagement with Christian fundamentalism's "extreme" (their term) child ministry. I open the chapter with an outline of the church's history and perplexing ideology, suggesting that its public ministry represents an agenda of emotional radicalism and violence. For "The Most Hated Family in America," their musical parodies offer a tactical means for expression, antagonism, community, and social bonding, as well as personal shielding during demonstrations. The second half of chapter 3 explores music's agency as an evangelizing and proselytizing tool among children in two Christian fundamentalist groups, Child Evangelism Fellowship and Kids in Ministry International. Particularly related to Pentecostalism and the practice of speaking in tongues, or "glossolalia," music acts as a conduit for experiences of awakened religious consciousness. Music might also be interpreted as a mechanism of "social induction" or "encultured" behavior, however, in which the children involved in such practices are subject to manipulated socioemotional experiences at the hands of music, not divine revelations at the hands of God. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of music's role in Christian fundamentalist efforts to indoctrinate children, efforts often compared by those within the movement to the intense indoctrination practices of the jihadi schooling of children.

While al-Qa'ida, the racist skinheads, and radical Christian fundamentalism tend to fall within the general classifications of religious and right-wing radicalism, violence and radicalism, of course, are not the sole domain of Far Right political, religious, or racial ideologies. Chapter 4 balances the scope of consideration to include movements emerging from the radical Left. The chapter addresses the most active and musical element within the radical Left today, radical environmental and animal rights activism — a movement for which I have crafted the acronym, REARA. The first section of chapter 4 introduces the movement and returns to the problematic issue of the terrorism label when referencing REARA direct action, a label increasingly applied to the movement's criminality by governmental agencies. Among the many challenges involved in studying the radical Left is the fact that groups, eco-animal rights ones included, are often made up of individuals maintaining vastly divergent and sometimes contradictory ideological commitments. Research suggests that within REARA, the uniformity of ideological motivation comes second to direct action, which defines ideology insofar as ideological inconsistencies among members appear mitigated by a deeper commitment to simply act.

The second section of the chapter outlines the historical and ideological backgrounds that now root eco-animal rights militancy; it also tackles the use of playful terminology, like "monkeywrenching," within movement rhetoric and publications, which seemingly serves to lighten the severity and destructive impact of the movement's violence. Additionally, an assessment of REARA's organizational models is presented, one in which traditional aboveground organizations, like Earth First!, are distinguished from leaderless resistance movements, like the Animal Liberation Front or Earth Liberation Front. Such "nongroups" operate under the domain of tactical strategies or direct-action ideology rather than conventional hierarchical models, and they disavow figureheads, meetings,

or even awareness of other members. The third and fourth sections of chapter 4 consider examples of music cultures within REARA. Earth First!, the first major eco-radical group in the United States, evidences a vibrant history of musical creation in which acoustic-guitar protest songs largely formed the cultural life of their annual meetings and have proven central to the group's longevity and activism. The chapter closes by delving into the punk, hard-core, and metal music of animal rights activism. While the genre is mostly a musical subculture of personal edification, some bands and advocates of Vegan Straight Edge have adopted militant positions on animal liberation and enacted violence to considerable degrees to further their social politics.

The fifth chapter offers a comparative analysis of the radical music cultures presented in the preceding four chapters, drawing on the analytic tools of a variety of disciplines, including social psychology, communications, criminology, and terrorist and hate-group studies, among others. In the first section, I reflect on the distinct relationship between music and ritual elements of music and their messages. Although sonic, ritual, and social-bonding influences often represent the initial steps in the processes of radicalization, music within radical culture ultimately aims to bring the listener to the directive of its ideology. As such, I recognize music in these groups as a form of propaganda, drawing on recent research in information operations and communications to explain why these groups dedicate such considerable time, thought, and resources to musical production.

Next, I interpret the propagandistic message of such groups as subtle or explicit projections of quintessential good-bad distinctions, in which the motivations for radical and violent behavior are musically depicted as acts of defensive and heroic righteousness against a threatening, outer "other." The radical message itself is enacted on the listener through a recognizable and predictable set of themes, a lexical framework intended to prescribe a cognitive change toward hateful attitudes and the enactment of violent behavior through music. This machinery of radicalism is set forth in notable research across disciplines, including, social psychologists Robert J. and Karin Sternberg's *Nature of Hate*, political scientist Roger D. Petersen's *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, and sociologist Kathleen M. Blee's *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*, among many others. The creation of in or out "groupness," critical to the validation of any radical agenda, is often achieved through the storied portrayal of an opposing group as a dehumanized enemy of God, morally or racially impure, foreign oppressor, greed-driven consumer, and more.

The subsequent two sections demonstrate how these thematic elements of radical propaganda are manifest in the discourse and song lyrics of each radical group. Their musical texts are grounded in "us versus them" distinctions in which activists are depicted as protectors of a truth. Through the devaluation of out-group members, the rhetoric and musical texts of the four case studies influentially project their respective ideologies as justified defenses of noble virtue in which violence and hatred are sanctioned, even mandated, through action.

The final section of chapter 5 draws attention to recent scholarship identifying emotion as an important catalyst in instigating violent behavior or hostility toward a person or group. These studies clearly demonstrate the processes through which emotion enacts the cultivation and perpetuation of violence. I connect such research to music as a powerful mediator of emotion and explore the ability of music to invest the listener with emotion, at the possible expense of a rational contemplation of radical and violence-endorsing messages. By understanding music within radical culture in this way, we may come to a deeper understanding of why the art form has been afforded a prominent position in the propaganda strategies of almost every nationalist, religious, or ideologically driven group in history. The closing to *Radicalism and Music* reflects on the disquieting parallels that exist between the ways in which music operates in radical cultures and the many uses of music in contemporary mainstream society.

During the research process, I conducted interviews with members and former members of radical groups, obtained rare propaganda, attended concerts and festivals, spent countless hours on Internet sites interacting with discussion forum members, and attempted to enter as deeply as possible into the musical worlds of these cultures. In large part my methodology for researching the book originated with ethnographic study. I wanted to know what was happening “on the ground” within the musical cultures of these radical groups (if there were any at all). In ways similar to my previous research on music and American soldiers and Marines in Iraq, I felt it necessary to allow my theoretical and interpretative frameworks to emerge as a product of ethnography. Naturally, anyone seeking to contact, conduct research on, or even just observe the inner life of such groups faces a wide range of obstacles. The close-knit, private nature that characterizes most radical organizations and individuals; their penchant for separateness, secrecy, and self-protection; and their specific views on outsiders create many stumbling blocks for anyone trying to access their world. My personal background as a middle-aged, white American man, while it granted me access to some groups, posed serious challenges in some areas of study, particularly the research on al-Qa’ida. The limitations of geography, accessibility, cultural and racial outsider status, language (my modest Arabic), among others, presented obstacles difficult to overcome. Yet to omit al-Qa’ida for these reasons would have been to ignore one of the most important and defining radical groups of the twenty-first century, a group for which almost no musicological research exists. I never went undercover into these worlds, but I attempted to gain as close access as circumstances allowed. Most important, I was honest with everyone I met. In all personal interactions, I used my real name and spoke truthfully about my profession, my reasons for being there, and my personal beliefs. At no point was there deliberate deception or dishonesty in my conversations with anyone at any time. My hope is that if the individuals I write about in this book were to read it, they would find my presentation an evenhanded and accurate description of their worldviews.

Throughout my research and writing, I made a conscious effort to approach the people and ideas in question exclusive of preset, fixed judgments or expectations, to allow impressions to form directly from my experiences and encounters.

The journey of writing this book required not only self-reflection about such possible biases but deliberate self-questioning about ways to maintain and support an impartial predisposition, focused on fostering peaceful interactions rather than breeding more hatred and, possibly, violence. It would have been opportune to approach these groups with a predetermined attitude about the validity of their beliefs and their stereotype as mostly uneducated, brainwashed racist and religious fanatics who lack the ability of modern, critical thinking or a factual worldview. While such assumptions may have yielded more popular conclusions than perhaps will be received, this would not have been consistent with my experiences and observations.

By adopting their respective views, many individuals in radical organizations have willingly accepted a set of disadvantages and enmity that far outweigh the benefits of being members of such groups. Some of these individuals have been susceptible to recruitment because they had profoundly negative personal experiences or witness events that lead them to certain assumptions about the world. One can point out larger social, political, and historical injustices that contextualize these worlds and personal experiences, but such frameworks may carry little to no relevance in their day-to-day lives. Respectful listening, understanding what formed their point of view, and working toward a possible resolution is the means of enacting any kind of lasting change.

Finally, the inherently flawed nature of this endeavor deserves mention. Anyone relying on open-source resources (nonclassified documents) and ethnographic observation to study these groups faces limitations. The cultural lives of such organizations can change rapidly, and it is impossible to predict how they will behave even in light of the consistency of past actions. For instance, it would have been almost impossible to foresee that the Earth Liberation Front, a direct-action ideology founded on the premise of violent action, would now renounce its primary mode of criminality, arson, as “an exercise in futility and self-defeat.”¹⁰ My documentation, examination, and analysis derives from an admittedly limited scope, focusing primarily on groups within or directly targeting the United States, active from the approximate period of 2008 to the beginning of 2014. While this may seem like the obligatory caveat affixed to most studies by academics, one should not ignore the particular fluidity of information innate to this topic.

There are astonishing commonalities among these groups and the cultivation of hatred and violence in general. One aspect is that music is exploited to its fullest potential within their “sound” strategies: as a tool for recruiting, member retention, social bonding, motivation for action, cultural persuasion, and many others. But the coercive uses of music are not isolated to radical cultures; they are at play in our own backyards, in political propaganda, sports rivalry, and much of commercial music. By understanding the Janus-faced nature of music, I hope that we, as lovers of music, will be empowered in our listening.

We also see that music/song is a sociological symbol, and it is a particularly strong one in this era. The airwaves are full of song; almost all of them filthy, idolatrous, blasphemous, and utterly catering to the flesh. Even faux-Christians use music to promote heresy.

Music is a primary instrument for teaching sin.

E-mail to the author from Margie Phelps, Westboro Baptist Church

If your revolution doesn't have music, you don't have a fucking revolution!

Telephone conversation with Darryl Cherney, Earth First! Activist and Musician