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Pagans and Satan and Goths, oh my¹: dark leisure as communicative agency and communal identity on the fringes of the modern Goth scene

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Abstract

Goth music's cultural terrain has been extensively mapped in the first decade of this century. Through a dark leisure framework, this paper examines the way in which parts of the Goth scene embraced paganism and, latterly, Satanism, as actual practices and ontologies of belief. Ethnographic research and case studies on paganism and Satanism in Goth subcultures are used. This paper argues that being a pagan or Satanist in the fringes of the Goth scene is a way of using dark leisure to resist, usefully and meaningfully, the fashionable but instrumental globalized choice of mainstream popular culture.

Key words: Dark leisure; subcultures, Goths

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Introduction and theoretical framework

Dark Reverberations Festival, York. We are here with thirty others, familiar faces, some strangers. It's an older Goth crowd. There's a man with a Sol Invictus badge pinned to his waistcoat. A bisexual rockabilly singer. No Victorian brides here. At the front of the stage we stand in a trance when Arcana play their dark, pagan folk. This is transcending the everyday. For a moment, the road of pizza places and kebab shops outside is forgotten. The tawdriness of the world is real enough, but here there is another truth. Arcana embody the pagan turn, the dark turn, on the fringes of the Goth scene. They are the reason we are all here. The festival ends with blessings, then we all buy the tee-shirt on the way out.

For Chris Rojek (2000), dark leisure is associated with intentionality and agency. Individuals in late modernity have the freedom to choose to reject mainstream leisure forms in favour of ones that disturb.. Dark leisure is the kind of leisure activity that rejects the mainstream, transgresses norms and values, and allows the people undertaking that leisure to identify themselves as liminal, deviant, alternative, rebellious non-conformists (Rojek, 2000; Williams, 2009). The edges of the Goth scene - and the dark turn in those liminal spaces (the turn to dark leisure forms, such as paganism and Satanism) - are the focus of this paper. We are insiders, using ethnography and unstructured interviews with pagan and Satanist Goths, to build a critical analysis of the meaning and purpose of the dark turn. We will use the work of Habermas (1984, 1987) to explore the tension between the freedoms associated with this turn and the compromises with the mundane, instrumentalised world of popular culture. This paper builds on the Habermasian framework developed previously in this journal by one of the authors (Spracklen, 2006, 2007) and which uses Habermas to understand the meaning and purpose of leisure. From counter culture to subculture to the ubiquity of every black-clad wannabe vampire hanging around the centre of Western cities, Goth has transcended a musical style to become a part of everyday leisure and popular culture. The music's cultural terrain has been extensively mapped in the first decade of this century (Brill, 2008; Goodlad and Bibby, 2007; Goulding and Saren, 2009; Hodkinson, 2002; Siegel, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). In this paper, we examine the way in which parts of the Goth scene (locally in the north of England and globally) have embraced paganism and, latterly, Satanism, as actual practices and ontologies of belief. We research this shift through a combination of ethnographic work at festivals and interviews with the members of a Gothic dance group based in the north of England. We account for shift through the theoretical framework of dark leisure: liminal, transgressive leisure that challenges notions of acceptability, taste and conformity (Rojek, 2000). Unlike Rojek, however, who has chosen to retreat into a leisure theory of intentionality (Rojek, 2010), we prefer to see dark leisure as the site of a struggle between Habermasian communicative and instrumental rationalities (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

Communicative rationality is the application of free reason and democratic discourse to the construction of the public sphere, the way in which we discuss and make choices about the things we do in life (such as the sports we play and the books we read, or the parties we vote for), ideally free from constraint: a rationality that

constructs what Habermas (1984) calls the lifeworld. In the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas describes how leisure, culture, recreation and tourism are key areas of struggle between the communicative, free-thinking of the lifeworld and the brutal commodification and consumption of capitalism:

The thesis of internal colonization states that the subsystems of the economy and state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth, and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. It should be possible to test this thesis sociologically wherever the traditionalist padding of capitalist modernization has worn through and central areas of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization have been open drawn into the vortex of economic growth and therefore of juridification... The trend toward juridification of informally regulated spheres of the lifeworld is gaining ground along a broad front – the more leisure, culture, recreation and tourism recognizably come into the grip of the laws of commodity economy and the definitions of mass consumption... the more the school palpably takes over the functions of assigning job and life prospects, and so forth.

(Habermas, 1987, p. 368)

Despite the brevity of the discussion, Habermas' use of leisure in *The Theory of Communicative Action* provides the justification for leisure theory, leisure studies and an on-going empirical programme in leisure, sport and tourism that critically investigates the struggle over the meaning and purpose of leisure. The pessimism about art does not rule out leisure and culture being places where communicative rationality can produce communicative action: only that to be communicative, there has to be a public (externalized) sphere in which debates about meaning can take place. Leisure can only be morally instructive if it plays a communicative role, or is the product of such communicative rationality. Where leisure is a product of consumption and commodification, the end-point of some instrumentally rational system, such as global capitalism, it becomes less useful as a space, form or activity that gives individuals meaning and purpose. Then there is only the circus, at which we are entertained and made to forget our dreams of freedom and democracy. Dark leisure follows the same rules – the meaning and purpose of dark leisure is in its communicative value to the people who choose to experience it.

Dark leisure, then, is a useful term in helping us navigate our way through the interconnecting networks of communicative agency, instrumentality, communal identity and belonging. In this postmodernizing world (Blackshaw, 2010; Bramham, 2006; Rojek, 2010; Spracklen, 2009; Stebbins, 2011), dark leisure becomes one of the few places where resistance and communal identity formation is possible against the forces of homogenization and control identified by Adorno (1947).

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. The first section discusses method. There follows a history of Goth music and the Goth scene for those unfamiliar with it. Then follow two sections covering ethnographic data and data from the interviews. The final section presents a critical discussion, exploring ways in which the dark ideologies in Goth are communicative leisure choices.

Method

Exploring communicative rationality and action requires a methodological approach that gives space to participants to reflect and articulate their feelings and allows researchers to be part of the research process. This paper draws on auto-ethnographic experiences arising from the researchers' engagement with the Goth scene in the north of England (on localized identities and popular music scenes (see Kruse, 2010), combined with unstructured interviews with a small number of Goths associated with a particular subculture within the local scene: Gothic tribal fusion dance. The ethnography was opportunistic – we attended thirty-two Goth events, festivals and gigs between 2006 and 2011. Although we did not live full-time as Goths, these ethnographic chapters allowed us to construct an understanding of the pagan/Satanist Goth scene (helped of course by our own investment in and engagement with alternative subcultures). In our approach to this research, we follow Malbon (1999), who complements ethnographic work on the clubbing scene with unstructured interviews, conversational in style with no interview schedule. His rationale is that such informal, unstructured questioning is more likely to offer respondents the space to open up and say what they are really thinking. Following this unstructured interview approach, we spoke to four white female participants in the local Goth scene in the north of England, all of whom belonged to a Gothic tribal fusion dance group. These Goths were selected because they were members of the dance group *Tanzhexen*, a group that performs dances that draw on paganism, Satanism and other dark subcultures to construct disturbing performances. We talked to them in a number of settings about their spiritual beliefs and their involvement in the Goth scene. It could be argued that our research sample is not representative, and we would agree. We have made no attempt to ensure any balance with respect to age, gender, class or ethnicity. However, this is not a weakness of the research – rather, it reflects the gendered nature of the Goth scene, alternative spiritualities within the scene (Brill, 2008) and a reflection of the scene's essential whiteness (Hodkinson, 2002).

*De origine actibusque Getarum*²

Like the Goths of the late Roman Empire, there are competing narratives about the modern Goth's formative years and its place of origin. Accounts of Goth's early history range from its appearance out of the late seventies punk scene (Baddeley, 2006; Mercer, 2002) to the early nineties anachronisms of Siegel (2005): the Goth music scene actually emerged out of the alternative music scene of the United Kingdom in the early 1980s. While some of the early Goth bands were strongly influenced by punk, particularly Siouxsie and the Banshees, the scene signified a break with the aesthetics and politics of punk (cf. Nehring, 2007, pp. 5-6).

One of the bands in the 1980s that did most to popularize Goth music and Goth aesthetics, hence ensuring the genre's medium-term existence, was The Sisters of Mercy. Their music took the Goth guitar sound and backed it up with a loud drum machine and a heavy, deep vocal. A string of independent releases on the 12-inch vinyl format combined with the smoke-wreathed presence of front man Andrew

Eldritch, saw The Sisters of Mercy take Goth rock into the European music press. The lyrical content of the early Sisters songs spoke of drug addiction, rejection and alienation – often using sophisticated symbolism and metaphor. Some of that symbolism was the seed for later stereotypes of Goth culture, where love is tragic and the metaphorical becomes literally real. For instance, in the song, ‘The Temple of Love,’ there is a verse that could have been written by one of the many copycat Goth metal bands of the late 1990s, referring to a strange figure, the devil, wearing a black dress and watching the singer.

Like the other band members, Andrew Eldritch was not and is not a Satanist. The devil in a black dress is not literally a devil. The Sisters of Mercy played with the imagery of darkness – The Sisters used a five-pointed star in their designs, for example – but there was no agenda, overt or otherwise, to introduce any particular dark leisure form or ideology. (Indeed, Eldritch has made clear his atheist, rationalist, critical left world-view on the band’s official web-site.) However, other bands quickly adapted the imagery and lyrical content of The Sisters of Mercy, replacing playful word-play with serious intent.

Goth rock became mainstream pop when Wayne Hussey and Craig Adams split from The Sisters of Mercy to form The Mission. Signed to a major label, the band established a vaguely pagan spiritual aesthetic and ideological lyrical content: the song “Deliverance” (from the album *Carved in Sand*, 1990), for example, name-checked the legends of Arthur and evoked an English landscape taken from the work of pagan fantasy author Marion Zimmer Bradley.

A final band from the 1980s British Goth scene is worth considering in this brief history. The Fields of the Nephilim borrowed the sound and theatre of The Sisters of Mercy but took their lyrical content, initially, from pulp-horror films and stories. By 1988, they had shortened their name to The Nephilim, and their self-titled album of the same year (*The Nephilim*, 1988) invoked Crowley³ and Cthulhu⁴. By the 1990s, it was this version of Goth’s spirituality that influenced the lyrical content of much industrial (Siegel, 2005) and black metal music in the United States and Europe (Spracklen, 2006, 2010).

In Europe in the 1990s, Goth retained its popularity as a music genre, especially in Germany where the scene was influenced by rock, dance music and folk. In the United Kingdom, the dominance of American Goth metal acts like Marilyn Manson pushed some Goth music towards mainstream metal, but other forms of Goth continued in the alternative underground: firstly, in the guise of EBM, electronic beat music inspired by hard dance; secondly, in the form of traditional Goth bands such as Inkubus Sukkubus, which set out to be explicitly pagan and Wiccan⁵ in their imagery and song content (cf., their album *Vampyre Erotica*, 1997). With the popularity at the time of New Age self-help books, the rediscovery of films like *The Wicker Man* and of course *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Hutton, 2001), it was perhaps no surprise to see Inkubus Sukkubus developing these themes of dark feminism. Tapping this pagan, folkloric root led to the rise of *Mittelalter* in Germany and neo-Folk in the Goth/industrial/punk scenes. The rise of neo-Folk and other post-industrial versions of alternative music saw the creation of labels such as Cold Spring Records, where

explicitly dark, libertarian, fascist, provocative, pagan or Satanic musical projects find an outlet. The group Satori, for instance, released an album for the label in 2009 (*Contemptus Mundi*), in which the “Magus Peter H Gilmore, High Priest of the Church of Satan... bestows a seething tirade against the weakness of the modern world.” (from Cold Spring website: http://www.coldspring.co.uk/mail_order/s.php). Here there is much crossover with Satanic, misanthropic black metal, inspired by Crowley (Spracklen, 2006, 2009) and the reinventions of Satanism as Elitism and Play associated with Anton LaVey⁶ and others (Baddeley, 2005).

Ethnography: Four nights in the Underworld

Hodkinson (2002) and Goulding and Saren (2009) identify the importance of Whitby Goth Weekend in the subcultural lives of British Goths. We are there in 2009 with some reluctance – a number of Goths have expressed concerns about its continued relevance, the management of the festival, and, crucially, its authenticity as a representation of Goth. Certainly, when we arrive in Whitby, there is a preponderance of people in Victorian fancy dress, but there is little in this playful costuming that could be identified as essentially Goth: no fetish wear, extravagant hair or make-up. It is, in fact, as if someone has misunderstood the definition of Goth subculture as something to do with Victorian Gothic (which is not necessarily true, Dracula notwithstanding), and has given out the order to dress accordingly. Once we are inside the Pavilion, however, we do see “proper” Goths (time-served veterans referencing the late eighties scene), some of whom we recognise from the northern English scene we have been studying.

We are at Whitby to see Faith and the Muse, the headliners of the final (Halloween) night. Before they come on stage, we squeeze our way to the front. Faith and the Muse’s lyrics deal with a loosely pagan spirituality, combined with an ecological and radical feminist ideology. It is no surprise that a majority of the people with us at the front are wearing pentagrams of some variety; where we stand, the majority are women. The pagan Goth scene is significantly gendered: women outnumber the men in the crowds, and even the style of paganism is gendered. We see a man in a *Wicker Man* tee-shirt, the smoke and flames visible in a stylized motif. Such a tee-shirt (as we will discuss later), is a symbol of the Habermasian instrumentality of the wider Goth scene, where complicated pagan spiritualities have become reduced to a corporate tee-shirt promoting a horror film.

With Faith and the Muse tonight are two dancers from the tribal group Serpentine. When they arrive on stage the crowd is transfixed. They are joined by William Faith and Monica Richards, the two founders of Faith and the Muse, who introduce new songs inspired in part by Japanese folklore and spiritual traditions. The new songs are perfectly matched with the on-stage use of *taiko* drums. However, the crowds reserve their greatest energy for the ballad “Sparks” (from their album *Elyria*, 1994), with its message of hope in darkness and reawakening.

Another night finds us watching Sieben, from Sheffield, formed by violinist Matt Howden. Matt has previously worked with a number of pagan neo-folk bands, including the influential group Sol Invictus (a reference to Mithras, the Unconquered

Sun of the Roman Empire, whose festival of 25 December has been adopted by the Christian church). We had seen Sol Invictus in a previous year, when they played their first gig in London for seven years on a night dedicated to the secret life of the city. With Sol Invictus that night was a folk music historian, Andrew King, singing in his best Lord Summerisle (of the film *The Wicker Man*) style. This night in Sheffield, Sieben are supporting the German Goth band Diary of Dreams at The Corporation nightclub. There are many metalheads in the venue, drawn to live music or the rock pretensions of the main act. Support acts are traditionally fair game for taunts and mockery in rock music and Matt looks nervous. But as soon as he plugs in, his music seems to entrance the rowdy moshers⁷ at the front. He plays riffs on the violin that are then immediately sampled and looped back into the feed, so the songs build and build into a rising beat (which again, is sampled on stage when he taps the side of his instrument). Then Howden starts to sing – about the dark countryside above Sheffield, the moors of the Peaks, and the shifting of seasons (cf., *Ogham Inside the Night*, 2005) – and we feel something hidden in the shadows being revealed, as if we are initiates at some Eleusinian ritual. The way Howden constructs the songs on stage makes the moment truly communicative. For the pagans in the crowd, there is something more substantial at work, an act of Habermasian communicative action, a moment of true liminality. This is music to be played live, an invocation to the spirit of the moors: it cannot be reproduced on record, though of course Sieben do compromise and sell CDs at the merchandise stall.

Our third night in the ethnographic underworld sees us at a Gothic bellydance festival in Leicester. The night before, we watched professionals from around the world performing a number of acts influenced by paganism, Satanism, horror films and vampires. This is pure commerce, pure Habermasian instrumentality: the professionals have adopted the style of dark Gothic, of dark paganism, because they see a market to be tapped, an opportunity to distinguish themselves from mainstream tribal bellydance. We know from their websites that some of the professionals happily switch styles to get gigs. This second night, there is an open stage for any of the women who have attended the festival to perform their moves. There are men in the audience, mainly husbands and partners of bellydancing Goths. Tonight there is a wide range of performances, from burlesque solo acts to traditional tribal bellydance. Halfway through the night, Tanzhexen (the dance of witches) come on stage and dance to the Elane song “Open the Gates” (*The Silver Falls*, 2008).

Satanism is evident in the imagery and music of a number of European bands influenced by medievalism. At a festival on Easter Sunday 2009, we witness a concert by Rosa Crux. There are about twenty people here: this is the true communicative underground, the authentic, dark leisure space that feels a million light-years away from the market stalls and fancy dress of Whitby Goth Weekend. We get to the front of the stage and look at the instruments in front of us: to the right, a series of military-band drums, connected to mechanical drumsticks, which in turn are connected to some electrical device; to the left, a wooden frame with what look like church bells. On closer inspection, the bells have been cast with the Rosa Crux name and skull and crossbones symbol. Not only that, but each one has the name of a demon from the

Judaeo-Christian tradition: Behemoth and Astaroth, for example. In the liner notes for the album *Lux in Tenebris Luce* (2008), the band explains that: “Why give them the name of devils?... Satan and Christ represent two extremes of the same idea... it is an Antagonism, two opposite and perfect symbols... These demon names have a purpose: to take back the bells from the church.” Behind us, in the middle of the venue, is something covered in black. When the band comes on to play, they are accompanied by a self-styled Infernal Choir of backing singers, along with an array of disturbing vignettes (demons, skulls, empty churches) projected onto a back screen. The military drums play automatically, like a medieval drum machine. Then, when the band performs the song “Omnes qui descendunt”⁸, the thing behind us is revealed: two naked performers kneeling on a plinth. The crowd gathers around the plinth, oblivious of the band, and when the rhythm of the song develops, the two performers begin to cover themselves with handfuls of dust, which spill everywhere in a grey cloud. In the tight space of the venue, under a railway-bridge arch, it feels like we have followed Dante into the first circle of Hell.

Interviewing Local Goths in the Northern scene

One of our respondents – W – came to the Goth scene through an earlier interest in heavy metal. Her paganism is loosely associated with the revival of Northern European paganism within the metal scene (Van Helden, 2010); W holds strong anti-Christian views, and wears a Thor’s Hammer. When we sat with her and the rest of the group at a bellydance hafla staged in a church hall, the Christian messages on the walls (“We have a love for Jesus”) caused her much amusement: “This is going to make a great picture, isn’t it, us lot with that in the background... surprised they let us in!”

W sees Goth as complementing her pagan beliefs, and is keen to see the dance group perform at pagan festivals across the country, where bands such as Inkubus Suktubus perform. The discussion about pagan festivals with one of us (BS) showed W’s preference for a Goth scene that was proper because it was associated with the paganism most ‘proper’ Goths espoused:

W: I’d be up for that [dancing at pagan festivals], it’s more interesting

B: More interesting?

W: More they’d appreciate it, I think... what we do. It’s more about understanding each other. Pagans will appreciate us. It’s [the] real thing, it’s what most Goths are into these days.

B: Most Goths?

W: Proper Goths.

W’s metal-inspired pagan beliefs are essential to her engagement with the Goth scene. Respondent X came to paganism through another route, inspired more by the cultural shift to alternative spirituality associated with feminism, localism and environmentalism. X listens to Goth music and is a member of the Gothic tribal fusion group, but does not need Goth music to be spiritual. The scene is merely something that shapes her leisure activities and choices in a darkly spiritual way. In this, X is similar to Respondent Y, who belongs to an occult tradition associated

partly with Ancient Egyptian rites, and partly with modern reinterpretations of such rites found in the dark fringes of paganism. For Y, her role in the tradition's rituals is as important to her as her place in the Goth scene; but her beliefs and the scene are not related. As she explained to us:

Goth music is just something I got into when I was a teenager, something the same time I was exploring [the occult]. I wasn't a Goth because of my beliefs. I wasn't into this path because I was listening to Goth bands.

Y argues that her interest in Goth music and Goth culture, and her interest in alternative spirituality, developed separately from each other. That said, it is clear that the Goth scene provides a space where she can find a connection between the two interests through dance. For Y, there is an authentic Gothness associated with the communicative nature of the dark, underground, liminal pagan/Satanic scene, as she explained in answer to a question from one of us (KS):

K: Would you call yourself a true Goth, then?

Y: No, there is no such thing. But there is an edge to the culture. There has to be something meaningful to being a Goth. It isn't just about clothes and music, it's the feel.

K: The darkness?

Y: That's corny but yes, you're right, I guess.

Finally, Respondent Z has been closely associated with the local Goth scene since the 1990s, and through the scene she became involved in an alternative spirituality even closer to the Crowleyesque philosophy of self-fulfillment and self-control, the OTO⁹, a rationalist tradition inspired perhaps by Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. This rationalist "Satanic" tradition developed in response to the loose pagan spirituality of the 1990s Goth scene, which changed locally into a Christian Goth scene. Surrounded by Christians, Z and the others in her tradition retreated into an upper room of a particular nightclub to discuss science, religion and self-development:

It just came out of those nights, basically, it's more a philosophy than a belief system, about being responsible for your own choices... there were a lot of people who had brought that pagan thing in to the scene, but this wasn't like that at all.

Again, Z does not see anything inevitable about her adherence to this alternative, dark spirituality and her adherence to the Goth scene. But again, the scene gave her and her friends the space to explore and develop these ideas and put them into practice.

Discussion: choosing, consuming and resisting

Choosing

What is at work here is a Habermasian communicative rationality associated with the pagan/satanic Goth subculture, a dark leisure scene, which allows Z (and indeed the

other respondents) to make meaning in her life and to resist the increasing commodification of popular culture. As Z explains:

You have all that Goth scene stuff and it's all rubbish, really, the fashions and the music, Whitby [Goth Weekend]. It's no different to any other [music] scene. What matters is the friendships you make, the shared... The OTO was just a way of making that real, making Goth something else.

Paganism and other alternative spiritualities in the Goth scene are chosen by individuals as expressions of their faith, through a communicative choice. That is, following Habermas (1984, 1987), there is a communicative rationality at work, agency that is freely spent making a reasoned decision about beliefs and tastes. What Horkheimer (1947) described as objective reason is, for Habermas, only possible where there is a free interaction of ideas and debate (Habermas, 1981:1984, 1981:1987). If actors have the freedom to act in a democratic, communal manner, treating each other with respect and testing each other's claims, then it is possible to make sense of the world in a way that is classically rational (Outhwaite, 2005; Pederson, 2008).

The Goths we interviewed, and those in the clubs and gigs in our ethnographic fieldwork, have chosen to be Goths, and chosen to express their individual tastes and preferences through the selection of styles and spiritualities associated with what could be described as a Goth *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1986). This communicative agency is expressed through a desire to be seen to be countercultural or individually distinctive in a liminal, transgressive sense. Individuals in the Goth scene deliberately seek out Goth as a place to express themselves through dark leisure: something out-of-the-ordinary, something that plays with mainstream fears of unbridled sexuality, the carnivalesque, and the dark spiritualities of anti-Christian paganism and elitist Satanism (cf. Rojek, 2000, on the thrill of being a 'fan' of mass murderers). Those Goths who were in the crowd for Faith and the Muse, for example, use their *choice* of the band and the pagan themes running through their albums as a representation of their feminism, or environmentalism. Dark leisure is a place where communal identity can be felt through communicative action: our respondents all expressed a view that they are part of a scene, the Goth scene, a community to which they belonged, and which allowed them space to explore and make visible their alternative spirituality. Dark leisure helps these individuals become something they desire – a goddess, an acolyte, a dancer – through choosing to be Goths, and choosing to have particular spiritual and intellectual beliefs.

Consuming

Against the lifeworld of communicative action and rationality, in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987), Habermas presents what he calls the system: a symbolic construction that is created entirely from the workings of instrumentality on modernity. Instrumentality is purposive rationality and action, things done and ways of seeing the world imposed on us by the goal-seeking behavior of actors and

institutions that wish to limit our choice and our ability to get in the way of their goal-seeking. In many ways, Goth can be also understood as a place that reaffirms instrumental rationalities and promotes instrumental action in leisure and consumption. Whatever individuals in the scene might think about the nature of the music, the community, the genre, it is still a business operating in a market in a commoditized, globalized industry. Goth is not a communal music played live in a free setting. Goth is part of the Westernized commercial pop and rock music industry that has imposed itself on the rest of the world, and as such it reproduces the instrumental actions that govern that industry. Music is recorded and sold. The symbolic boundaries of the Goth scene are shaped by the consumption of commodities such as records, clothes and glossy magazines. Small labels and specialized shops and websites cater and foster demand for, commercial products.

There is an entire industry of clothes or variations of themes on fairies and witches. The success of Whitby Goth Weekend is partly attributable to the growth of the fringe market, stalls set up around different venues in town all piled high with the season's Goth fashions and everything any modern pagan Goth needs to be told they desire (Goulding and Saren, 2009). The people who run the stalls (and the festivals, and the nightclubs) may be authentic Goths who saw their first Sisters of Mercy gig in 1983, they may be true Wiccans or Satanists or adherents of Chaos Magick, but none of that gets in the way of them making a profit. Consuming dark leisure, then, inevitably involves an instrumental action that *compromises* the communicative agency of dark leisure itself: one cannot easily be truly liminal, or transgressive, within a capitalist framework. This could explain why alternative spiritualities, and bands expressing them, have developed in the Goth scene: these spiritualities form a rejection of instrumentality, and a bulwark against the excesses of consumption that shape other pop music genres.

Resisting

In the northern city where our respondents live, there are four Goth nights. One is a weekly event at a heavy metal venue and is not really taken seriously by Goths: the music it plays is more mainstream rock with some Emo¹⁰ thrown in for its mainly younger clientele. The largest event is a monthly night held at one of the city's university venues. This event is long-established and attracts hundreds of people from across the North of England. However, its success has seen its Gothness reduced: the music it now plays is more a mix of heavy metal and American Goth rock, with a measure of alternative 80s and 90s thrown in. The third night is a weekly one where the set-list from a very famous 80s/90s Goth nightclub is regularly resurrected, alongside industrial and EBM from more recent years. This night can attract up to 100 participants.

The final night is a monthly event held in the upstairs room of a pub, where about 20-30 Goths turn up to listen to a diverse range of European Goth and old-school Goth music, including *Mittelater* from Germany and pagan folk such as Elane. It is this fourth night that most of our respondents have attended on a regular basis, a night organised by older Goths for an elite audience sensitive to the history of the

scene, its European dimension and its elite ideologies of individual self-expression and alternative spirituality. Like the punks in Bennett (2006), these scene veterans are convinced of their authenticity, their history and their identity. There are no trendies here. It is at this Goth night, then, that Goth is purely dark leisure: the elite fringe of a counterculture, in defiance of mainstream taste (Whitehead, 2009). This is truly a liminal space, where one arrives after passing through the mainstream of the alternative scene, where one finds a place to define one's communal identity through a communicative discourse unfettered by the constraints of instrumentality. Against modernity, against Christianity, these Goths resist the lure of the commercial through dancing to music ignored by fashions and trend-setters. The alternative spiritualities our participants believe in support this liminal, transgressive ideology of anti-Christianity, of individualism and elitism (even the more New Age paganism of Respondent X is based on a notion of female emancipation from Christian morality, based on a notion of individual choice).

Conclusion

Bennett (2001, 2006, 2008) argues that postmodernity has led to a move away from identities defined by work to identities defined through play, leisure and choice (cf. Bauman, 2000; Bramham, 2006; Castells, 1996; Spracklen, 2009, Maffesoli, 1996; Roberts, 2001; Rojek, 2005, 2010; Spracklen, 2009; Stebbins, 2011). For Bennett, the importance of popular culture as a site for the production of new identities is just a symptom of the collapse of traditional (modern) social structures (Kruse, 2010): the rise of postmodernity, whether universal or specific to those who can afford it, has led to greater choice and freedom in our leisure lives.

Dark leisure, then, is a useful term in helping us navigate our way through the interconnecting networks of communicative agency, instrumentality, communal identity and belonging. Being a pagan or Satanist in the fringes of the Goth scene is a way of using dark leisure to usefully and meaningfully resist the fashionable, the comfortable and the blandly instrumental globalized popular music choice between one X-Factor winner and another.

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¹ The pun in our title comes from a discussion in *Wizard of Oz* of the possibility of meeting "wild animals". Between them, the Tin Man and Scarecrow extemporise a short list of possibilities, to which Dorothy responds "Oh! Lions and tigers and bears. Oh my!"

² Translation: 'On the Origin and Acts of the Goths'. This was a work written by the sixth-century Roman official Jordanes about the origins of the Goth kings (and the Goths) who ruled Italy back then. Like modern-day accounts of modern-day Goths, it is a work filled with fiction and confusion.

³ Aleister Crowley, infamous Satanist of the twentieth century.

⁴ The Great Old One from the horror stories of H.P. Lovecraft, a monstrous alien viewed as a god by crazed humans (Lovecraft, 2005).

⁵ Wicca is a modern form of paganism supposedly based on older British pagan beliefs revived in the twentieth century.

⁶ Founder of the Church of Satan: a church that believes Satan to be a symbol for individual agency.

⁷ Fans of heavy metal, a reference to moshing: banging your head in a form of dance.

⁸ Translation: 'All those that descend'.

⁹ Ordo Templi Orientis, a magical order created in the early twentieth century.

¹⁰ Emo – a type of emotionally-charged metal/punk/pop that has spawned an entire subculture among teenagers, often confused in the tabloid press with the Goth scene.