

Satanism in metal music, reflection on religion in *Infestissunam* (2013 - Ghost)

If some metal bands have released successful protest songs, metal music, especially extreme heavy metal, has also been described as “overly apolitical” (Morris 2015¹). While extreme metal can be associated with Satanism as a critic of Christianity, it is no longer considered as provocative as it once was in the Global North. Despite all that, there is continuing evidence that religions influence political decisions worldwide, and some metal bands still focus their discourse on faiths and beliefs.

The Swedish band Ghost use various musical influences and often resort to humor rather than the dark and apocalyptic discourse often associated with metal. At the same time, they use the visual heritage from extreme metal music, such as the corpse paint from black metal, and develop an artistic identity based on Satanism. With their satanic aesthetic and the concept they develop throughout the albums, Ghost demonstrate the workings of the political use of religion as an instrument of power.

As a metal band using extensive catholic references, how do Ghost manage to develop a reflection on religion? If not through outright protest songs, how is the critical discourse on religion developed?

The analyses will focus more specifically on the band’s second album, *Infestissunam* (2013), and will allow a reflection on the band’s concept and the medium used, including the music, the artworks produced by Zbigniew M. Bielak, the music videos and the costumes. This approach will determine the place given to criticism of religion and to the less obvious examination of the Catholic discourse on women by the band.

Biography:

Elise Girard Despraulex ;
CEAC, Université de Lille (France) – Faculté de musique, Université Laval (Canada)
elise.girard-despraulex.1@ulaval.ca / e.girardd@yahoo.fr

Elise Girard-Despraulex is a Ph.D. student in cinema and visual arts at the University of Lille (France) and in musicology at Laval University (Canada). Her dissertation focuses on neo-folk and metal bands influenced by folklore and religions in their aesthetic, and concentrates on the creation of a coherent identity through multiple mediums.

¹ Martin Morris (2015) Extreme Heavy Metal Music and Critical Theory, *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 90:4, 285-303, DOI: 10.1080/00168890.2015.1096167