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# SUBCULTURES, POP MUSIC AND POLITICS: SKINHEADS AND “NAZI ROCK” IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY

By Timothy S. Brown

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Right-wing extremist rock music—so-called “Nazi rock”—is one of the most problematic of popular musical genres. Emerging from the skinhead youth subculture in Britain at the end of the 1970s, and spreading to the continent and across the Atlantic in the following decade, it has served as accompaniment to a rising tide of racist and anti-immigrant violence in Germany, and become a focus of recruiting for the radical right world-wide. Yet as a generic category, “Nazi rock” is inherently unstable. A phenomenon that is at once artistic and political, it sits uneasily across analytical boundaries. The area of overlap between music genre and political content is, for one thing, far from complete. Right-wing extremist ideas are not strictly confined to skinhead rock music, but have found their way into a variety of other musical genres and youth subcultures.<sup>1</sup> The spread of Nazi rock beyond its original social boundaries—it is no longer simply “skinhead music”—means that the genre and the skinhead subculture are, if still intimately linked, by no means synonymous. Conversely, the various genres that make up “skinhead music” are by no means exclusively right-wing. Although Nazi rock arose out of the skinhead subculture, the subculture is—as will be seen—heavily divided about the meaning and value of the genre.<sup>2</sup>

The original skinhead movement of the late-1960s was a multicultural synthesis organized around fashion and music. The first skinheads were offshoots of the British “mod” subculture of the early 1960s. The mod was stylish, dedicated to cultivating the right look; upwardly mobile, very likely the son or daughter of a worker moving up into the white-collar realm of the bank or advertising firm. Above all, the mod was a music fan, obsessed with dancing to American soul music at all-night parties.<sup>3</sup> From the 1960s, the split implicit in the mod scene—between its working-class origins and its upper-class pretensions; between its subcultural subversiveness and its obvious appeal for boutique-owners and advertisers—began to widen. With the mod subculture swerving ever closer to the commodified, Carnaby-street hippie style of “swinging London,” certain mods began to emphasize the more proletarian aspects of the look, cutting their hair shorter and replacing dandified suits and expensive shoes with jeans and heavy boots. These no-frills “hard mods” prefigured the arrival of the first skinheads.<sup>4</sup> Whereas appreciation for black culture—above all American soul music but also Jamaican ska—had stood at the center of the mod way of life, the skinheads took the connection a step further; their reference point was a local symbol of cool, young Jamaican immigrants who modeled themselves on the authority-defying “rude boy” of the Kingston ghettos. The clean, hard look of these transplanted “rude boys” fit nicely with the stripped-down elements of the hard mod style, and their evening wear echoed the earlier mod emphasis on expensive suits and nice shoes. But by far the most critical element in the symbiotic relationship between skinheads and black immigrants was music. Skin-

heads embraced the reggae music of Jamaican performers like Desmond Dekker as their own. Reggae artists and labels, in turn, actively courted the skinheads, producing songs and albums aimed at this young white audience. The resulting genre—"skinhead reggae"—fueled the rise of the skinhead subculture while jump-starting the careers of many Jamaican performers in Britain. The identity of the original skinhead was thus constructed in dialogue with black immigrants and organized around music created by black performers.<sup>5</sup>

The decline of the original skinhead subculture by the early 1970s, and its rebirth later in the decade under the influence of punk rock, opened the way for new influences. Not only did fresh musical genres arise around which skinhead identity could coalesce—above all so-called "street punk," or "Oi!" music—but, for reasons to be discussed below, right-wing politics became fashionable and were embraced by increasing numbers of skinheads. This politicization—which became prominent at the end of the 1970s and reached a peak in the early 1980s—produced a crisis of identity in the skinhead scene. A schism developed between—on the one hand—right-wing skins ambivalent toward, or dismissive of, the subculture's black roots, and—on the other—left-wing or "unpolitical" skins who upheld these roots as being central to skinhead identity. The conflict between the two sides in this debate became a struggle to define the essence of the subculture, a fight over *authenticity*.<sup>6</sup>

Music played a crucial role in this process in two ways. First, music appreciation—specifically, knowledge of the reggae classics around which the skinhead subculture was originally organized—became, for one group of skinheads, a litmus test for authenticity. Second, genre itself became a contested site. On the one hand, the skinhead revival of the late 1970s crystallized around a punk-infused revival of the Jamaican sounds of Ska (a precursor to reggae) centered on the *Two Tone* label and bands like the *Specials* and *Madness*. These multiracial bands were explicitly political in their support for racial unity centered on appreciation for music. Yet their fortunes were inextricably linked with the skinheads who embraced them, yet all-too-frequently wrecked gigs with politically-inspired violence. On the other hand, the skinhead version of punk rock—Oi!—arose to supply the basis for the creation of an explicitly political style of skinhead music. Although the majority of the Oi! bands considered themselves "unpolitical," by providing an artistic forum for skinheads to express their own ideas, Oi! became a mirror of the left-right divide within the skinhead scene. It was out of this polarization that the genre of "Nazi rock" developed, and through it that successive iterations of the struggle for skinhead identity were played out.

A second site in the struggle over authenticity was personal style. The original skinhead subculture was created out of distinctive elements of clothing organized around the cropped hair: Tight Levi's jeans or StaPrest pants, Ben Sherman button-down and Fred Perry tennis shirts, work boots, suspenders (braces), and Levi's or Harrington jackets. Suits modeled on those of the Jamaican rude boys were often worn in the evening, but day or night, the skinhead look was hard, masculine, and working-class. With his boots, sturdy clothing, and cropped hair, the skinhead became, in the words of Phil Cohen, a "caricature of the model worker."<sup>7</sup> Like the "right" music, the "right" clothing signified taste and authenticity. But as new influences crept into the skinhead subculture during the revival of the late-1970s, style, like music, became a source of conflict as well as unity. In

order to match the shock valued of punk, these second-generation skins—many of them themselves ex-punks—took the style to new extremes, emphasizing the threatening aspects of the look at the expense of the sharp stylishness prized by the original skins. Boots became taller, military surplus MA-1 jackets replaced earlier more “civilian” looks, tattoos—previously confined to the arms or torso—began to crop up above the neckline, and hair became shorter to the point of baldness. These changes in style mirrored, to an extent, changes in the content of the subculture, with the more extreme looks coming to signify affiliation with the radical right.<sup>8</sup>

Reacting against this trend—which they considered a bastardization of the original skinhead style—numbers of skins began to stress the cultivation of the “original” look, making fashion, like music, a litmus test for authenticity. Violators of the proper codes were not skinheads, but “bald punks,” a category to which racists—who, in the eyes of purists, failed completely to understand what the subculture was about—were likely to belong. The connection between right-wing politics and “inauthentic” modes of dress was personified in the figure of the “bone head,” a glue-sniffing, bald-headed supporter of the extreme right, sporting facial tattoos, a union-jack T-shirt, and “the highest boots possible.”<sup>9</sup> Although the emphasis on correct style was not explicitly political, it grew—like insistence on the subculture’s black musical roots—out of a concern with the authentic sources of skinhead identity. As such, it was heavily associated with the attempts of left-wing and so-called “unpolitical” skins to “take back” the subculture from the radical right in the early 1980s.

Hard-and-fast political divisions were, however, never fully encoded in style; outward appearance never corresponded 100% to political viewpoint. To understand why, it is necessary to think about the factors around which the cohesion of the subculture was based. Queried about what belonging to the subculture means to them, skinheads inevitably cite things like drinking, hanging out with their friends, and—more ominously—“aggro” (violence). Less frequently cited, because so obvious, is the fact that they like the skinhead “look;” that is, they choose to belong to a community organized around a shared personal style. The style is, to be sure, connected with meaning(s). During the original wave of the late-1960s, the short hair of the skinhead represented a working-class reaction against changes in class and gender roles, especially the feminization of men represented by the hippie movement. The adoption of traditionally proletarian clothing, attitudes, and behaviors, at precisely the moment when these were beginning to disappear, was, according to Dick Hebdige, “a symbolic recovery of working class identity” that sought to preserve the boundaries of class through culture.<sup>10</sup> This maneuver was a type of resistance: Against the “coming man” of the late-1960s—the middle-class, peace-loving, long-haired student—the skinhead—short-haired, violent, and working-class—became the rebel *par excellence*.

But whatever the semiotic content of the skinhead “look”—and however subjectively important notions of skinhead as “a way of life” may be to its adherents—being a skinhead is, at the most basic level, a matter of adopting a certain outward appearance. The author of a work on gay skinheads, noting the irony represented by the presence of significance numbers of homosexuals in a scene based on an image of traditional masculinity, and citing the appropri-

ation of the skinhead look as another in a series of urban gay stereotypes—i.e. a uniform for “clubbing” rather than part of a “way of life”—argues that being a “real” skinhead was, in the final analysis, little more than a matter of “looking the part.”<sup>11</sup> While this view is, I believe, mistaken—gender is, after all, only one element in the skinhead’s system of meaning, and the complex relationship among music, politics, and notions of “authentic identity” in the skinhead subculture suggest that much more than fashion is at work—it brings up an important point: skinhead is, above all else, a *style community*. That is to say, it is a community in which the *primary* site of identity is personal style.

This appearance, this outward *form*, is, to be sure, linked with certain types of *content*. But the relationship between form and content is highly unstable. In a specific time and place—say, London in 1969—the relationship between the two is, relatively speaking, fixed.<sup>12</sup> But as the subculture moves along the temporal plane, going through successive stages—as, for example, in the skinhead “revival” of the late-1970s—the original form and content can be pulled apart, giving rise to new configurations. Similarly, as the subculture moves through space, occupying new geographic and cultural locations, form and content are reoriented yet again under the influence of new social, cultural, and historical factors. In exploring the development of “Nazi rock”—a hybrid creation that was decisively influenced by transnational contacts between England and Germany—it is important to keep in mind the constantly-shifting relationship between form and content in subculture.

A useful way of thinking about this process is represented by the idea of “articulation.” Keith Negus—who has proposed the use of the concept as a means of understanding the relationship between music production and music audiences—follows Stuart Hall in outlining two meanings of the term: On the one hand, articulation is *communication*, a form of self-expression that has, necessarily, to take place in relationship to an audience. “An artist,” in this sense, “is always articulating, via various intermediaries, to audiences who are always part of the process of ‘articulating’ cultural meanings.”<sup>13</sup> Meaning, in this context, is not a pure product of the artist’s intention, but is created out of the process of transmission to the audience. On the other hand, articulation represents a process of *linkage*, of joining together. Just as (to use Negus’ example) the cab and trailer of an “articulated lorry” are discrete and contingently-linked elements of a single vehicle, so elements in the chain of musical production and consumption can be seen to “articulate” with each other, thereby existing not “as discrete, fixed and bounded moments,” but as “a web of mediated connections.”<sup>14</sup> Understood in this dual sense of *communication* and *linkage*, the concept of “articulation” can serve as a tool for conceptualizing how “particular cultural forms become connected to specific political agendas and social identities. . . .”<sup>15</sup>

In exploring the relationship between the skinhead subculture and the development of the “Nazi rock” genre, we can use the concept of “articulation” as a means of approaching two key questions: 1) what accounts for the seemingly-paradoxical transformation of the skinhead subculture from one organized around appreciation for black cultural forms to one organized around white and frequently racist forms?; and 2) how and why is a movement based on a specifically “English” working-class identity meaningful in Germany? In approaching these questions, we will focus on three themes. The first is *movement*. As the subcul-

ture is communicated over time and through space—going through successive iterations with differing personnel and external circumstances—it articulates with new influences, musical and otherwise. It is out of these “communicative links” that sense is generated. We will try to understand how movement creates meaning. The second is *displacement*. We will explore how identities are developed less in relationship to the here-and-now, than in relationship to other times and places, to real and imagined pasts and geographic locations. We will seek to understand how absence becomes presence. The third is *conflict*. We will explore how identity is created through a series of constantly-shifting oppositions played out around a struggle to establish “authenticity.” The development of “Nazi rock” is a product of this struggle.

## ii. From England with Hate: Skinhead goes to Germany

The skinhead subculture that was transmitted to Germany was not the original, but the revival. The style was first brought to West Germany by British soldiers during the punk era of the late 1970s, but it was only during 1980–81 that a real skinhead scene began to develop. As noted above, the skinhead revival that grew out of the punk movement in England developed in association with new musical genres, the most important being “street-punk” or Oi! music. Rejecting the alleged art-school pretensions and commercialization of Punk Rock, street-punk bands like *Sham 69*, *Cocksparrer*, and the *Cockney Rejects* played a raw, stripped-down version of rock ‘n roll that attracted a huge skinhead following. In their use of shouted refrains and audience participation, these bands drew on elements of the traditional “pub sing-along,” and it was from the most common of these refrains—“Oi!” (a cockney greeting)—that the new movement received its name. Coined as a moniker for the new movement by *Sounds* magazine journalist Gary Bushell in 1980, the term “Oi!” quickly became synonymous with “skinhead.”

By 1980, this also meant synonymous with “right-wing.” The reasons for this are complex. The skinhead movement of the 1960s was not explicitly political, but it foreshadowed, in a number of areas, the politicization of the late-seventies revival. As is well-known, skinheads were accustomed to victimizing Asian immigrants, and as Roger Sabin has shown, they received little discouragement from adult society.<sup>16</sup> So-called “Paki-bashing” was merely a physical expression of the racist animosity of the larger society.<sup>17</sup> The sixties were a period of what might be called a racist consensus in Britain, with repeated legislation to curb immigration and increasing attempts by the conservative and radical right to turn immigration into an election-winning issue.<sup>18</sup> Leading politician Enoch Powell lent respectability to racist views when, in April, 1968, he spoke of the possibility of a race war if immigration was not curbed.<sup>19</sup> Powell’s warnings gave voice to a widespread anxiety about immigration, an anxiety that was being exacerbated at the time by a media frenzy over the “threat” posed by the immigration of Asians being expelled from the former colony of Kenya.<sup>20</sup> Powell’s speech also gave aid and comfort to neo-Fascists and helped to fuel the rise of the newly-founded National Front.<sup>21</sup>

In this atmosphere, the relationship between black and white youth began to turn sour as well, and the loss of the relatively short-lived symbiosis between the

reggae genre and the skinhead subculture was a factor in the latter's decline. By 1970, as reggae increasingly moved outside of the West Indian community, the honeymoon occasioned by the skinheads' infatuation with the music was giving way to turf battles between black and white kids over the control of key clubs. More importantly, by 1971, reggae was changing, slowing down, and adopting new themes. Under the influence of Rastafarianism, the music increasingly began to deal with mystical notions of Africa and black liberation that had little to do with the "party music" that reggae had been. Combined with a rising spirit of black pride—exemplified by Bob and Marcia's "Young, Gifted and Black"—the shift in focus began to make the music less congenial to young white aficionados of "skinhead Reggae." In one emblematic instance, young skinheads responded to the playing of "Young, Gifted and Black" by cutting the club's speaker wires and launching a violent melee to chants of "young, gifted, and white."<sup>22</sup>

As an attempt to establish a "defensively organized collective" around a mythic image of proletarian masculinity, skinhead involved an embracing, and even an amplification of, the prejudices of the parent society. It was very easy for this stance to "dissolve," in the words of Dick Hebdige, "... into a concern with race, with the myth of white ethnicity, the myth, that is, that you've got to be white to be British."<sup>23</sup> The skinhead subculture thus possessed a right-wing potential, a potential that came to the fore during the revival of the late-1970s–early-1980s. Economic decline, scarcity of jobs, and increased immigration intensified latent racist and right-wing attitudes in British society during the seventies and eighties, and the skinheads reflected these prejudices in exaggerated form. With their reputation for violence and patriotic-nationalist views, skinheads were seen as a particularly attractive target for recruitment by the radical right. The National Front renewed its efforts to win the support of working class youth, founding the Young National Front in late-1977. The openly-Nazi British Movement did the same, and with its emphasis on street combat, was particularly attractive to skinheads.<sup>24</sup> Right-wing skins probably never made up a majority, but by 1980, the sight of bomber-jacketed "boneheads" giving the "Sieg-Heil!" salute at Oi! gigs was common, and by 1982, the skinhead subculture was firmly cemented in the public mind as right-wing.

A key event in establishing the notoriety of the skinhead scene, and one which represented the symbolic dovetailing of music genre and subculture, violence and racism, was the so-called "Southall riot" of July, 1981. The riot took place at an Oi! gig at the Hambrough Tavern in the predominantly-Asian Southall suburb of West London. Southall was a main area of Asian immigration and therefore a prime target for provocations by the National Front. Southall had previously (April 1979) been the scene of a days-long confrontation between police and Asian youth after anti-racism activist Blair Peach was killed during a demonstration against a National Front march.<sup>25</sup> The alleged failure of the authorities to adequately investigate Peach's murder left a legacy of resentment that was exacerbated by frequent incidents of "Paki-bashing." Featuring performances by three well-known Oi! bands, *The Business*, *The Last Resort*, and *The 4 Skins*, the gig was seen as the last straw by young Asian locals, who put a stop to the performance by burning the venue to the ground. Large numbers of skinheads were arrested in the ensuing melee, and the press moved quickly to brand the entire skinhead scene as a stronghold of the extreme right, despite the fact

that the National Front had no direct involvement with the gig.<sup>26</sup> The resulting “moral panic” was fueled by public dismay over the second of two Oi! compilation albums released by *Sounds* magazine at the urging of journalist Gary Bushell. The first, *Oi! The Album*, had helped to launch the Oi! movement in November 1980. The second album, released only a couple of months before the Southall riot, carried as its title the unfortunate pun *Strength Through Oi!* (a play on the name of the Nazi-era leisure-time organization *Strength Through Joy*). The album also featured on its cover a photograph of Nicky Crane, a well-known skinhead who also happened to be the organizer for the British Movement in Kent. The album was not financed by the extreme right, nor were the bands represented on it necessarily right-wing, but the right-wing connotations of the title and cover art, taken in conjunction with the violence at Southall and the resulting charges of skinhead fascism in the press, solidified the right-wing reputation of the skinhead scene and Oi! music.

Whatever the political outlook of Oi!—most of the band members protested vigorously against being tarred with the fascist brush, and Gary Bushell went to great lengths to clear the Oi! name in the pages of *Sounds*—the music played an important symbolic role in the politicization of the skinhead subculture. By providing, for the first time, a musical focus for skinhead identity that was “white”—that is, that had nothing to do with the West Indian immigrant presence and little obvious connection with black musical roots—Oi! provided a musical focus for new visions of skinhead identity.<sup>27</sup> With the emergence of Oi!, a skinhead, could, in theory, completely avoid or negate the question of the subculture’s black roots. In practice, few did so, on the one hand recognizing that ska—like boots and shaved heads—was a fetish item of skinhead identity, and on the other, seeing no reason to deprive themselves of the enjoyment of the music and social scene around ska gigs. Nor was the lyrical content of Oi! without potentially right-wing implications. Although some of its themes—working-class pride, repression, and the bad luck of the down-and-out—gave it much in common with other genres like country and the blues, others—like violence (“Aggro”) and soccer hooliganism—could easily be interpreted in extreme right-wing terms. In providing a musical expression of skinhead identity that was exclusively white (and, unlike punk and ska, almost exclusively male), and in foregrounding violence as a pillar of the working-class lifestyle, Oi! provided a point of entry for a new brand of right-wing rock music.

As Oi! came to signify “white music,” the relationship between cause and effect was reversed: rather than skinheads adopting right-wing beliefs and expressing them in music, musicians with right-wing beliefs began to adopt the skinhead scene—white, male, violent and patriotic—as a field for their self-expression. These musicians brought new musical influences to bear on Oi!, creating a hybrid form of “skinhead rock” that would maintain its affiliation with the scene long after it ceased to bear any resemblance to the “street punk” sound out of which Oi! developed. Two key bands—*Skrewdriver* from England, and the *Böhse Onkelz* (“Evil Uncles”) from Germany—exemplify this process. Although different from each other in crucial ways, the two bands represent critical points of articulation between the Nazi rock genre and the skinhead Oi! scene out of which it developed, and illustrate the process by which new identities were created through the process of cultural transmission. London’s *Skrewdriver* was



the earliest and most influential of the “Nazi rock” bands. Its leader, Ian Stuart Donaldson, did more than anyone else to forge connections between right-wing rock music and the skinhead scene, and between the skinhead scene and the radical right. An ardent admirer of Adolf Hitler, Donaldson’s understanding of the skinhead subculture had little to do with skinhead reggae or the black-white connections from which it sprang, a fact that is hardly surprising given that Donaldson was a musician with right-wing views long before becoming a skinhead.<sup>28</sup>

Donaldson set up vital links for the burgeoning right-wing rock scene in two directions. First, he single-handedly forged a connection between the skinhead scene and the extreme right in Britain, forming the National Front -financed “White Noise Club” (WNC) to release right-wing bands, and releasing his own “White Power” single on the label. Second, he signed a contract with a German label, *Rock-O-Rama*, to release WNC bands in Germany, and when a split in the National Front led to a souring of relations between NF and the *White Noise Club*, he continued his association with *Rock-O-Rama* by founding “*Blood and Honor*,” a magazine and umbrella organization for right-wing skinhead bands. *Skrewdriver* released a string of albums on *Rock-O-Rama*, bringing the right-wing skinhead sound directly into Germany from 1982. *Skrewdriver* helped build the English-German connection in other ways, touring with one of the best-known German bands, Düsseldorf’s *Störkraft*. Further, the organization founded by Donaldson opened a German chapter—*Blood and Honor/ Division Deutschland*—which came to play an increasingly important role in promoting right-wing skinhead concerts in Germany in the 1990s. Aside from these practical links, the brand of music Ian Stuart Donaldson helped pioneer looked to Germany as a spiritual home. Not only did *Skrewdriver* gigs resemble Nazi rallies, with hundreds of shaved-head skins shouting Sieg Heil as Donaldson held forth from the stage, but *White Noise Club* and *Blood and Honor* bands reveled in historical and mythical imagery associated with Nazi Germany, WWII, and Norse mythology. A close friend of Donaldson’s, Kev Turner of the band *Skullhead*, dabbled in Odinism. As much as Donaldson and others like him considered themselves “English patriots,” the vision of white identity they championed was constructed in relationship to a mythic-historic past that was less English than German.

Far less explicitly political, and much less activist than *Skrewdriver*, Frankfurt’s *Böhse Onkelz* attached themselves to the skinhead subculture in Germany and went on to play an early role in cementing the link between right-wing nationalism and the skinhead scene. Although never a Nazi rock band in the vein of *Skrewdriver*—they never openly embraced ideas of “white power” and distanced themselves from the skinhead subculture as their popularity grew—the *Onkelz* laid the groundwork for the radicalization of the German skinhead music scene.<sup>29</sup> Like *Skrewdriver*, the *Böhse Onkelz* were not originally skinheads. The *Onkelz* formed as a punk band in 1979, with multi-colored hair that would have made them anathema in the later skinhead scene. Yet unlike most punk bands, which tend to express at least implicitly left-wing views,<sup>30</sup> the *Onkelz* earned a reputation as a right-wing racist band, above all because of their song “*Türken Raus*” (“Turks out”). By the time of the release of their first album on the

*Rock-O-Rama* label in 1984, the band members had adopted the skinhead style and achieved a strong following in the Frankfurt skinhead and soccer hooligan scenes.<sup>31</sup>

Like other bands that emerged in response to the importation of the skinhead subculture, the *Onkelz* looked to England as a source of identity. The brand names forming the stylistic core of the skinhead scene—Dr. Martin boots, Fred Perry and Ben Sherman shirts—were English, and early German skinheads even adopted the Union Jack as a symbol of their allegiance to the subculture.<sup>32</sup> As the German Skinhead scene grew, it began to reflect specifically German outlooks and concerns, but the importance of the English elements of style on which the scene was based were never far from the surface. A number of the songs on the *Onkelz* first album, *Der nette Mann*, draw an explicit connection between the (originally) English elements of style and key motifs of skinhead identity. In “Singen und Tanzen”, getting ready for the weekend involves “shining up the black Docs”, and looking in the mirror to admire a shaved head and “Fred Perry, freshly ironed.” In “Stolz,” the elements of style are combined not just with skinhead pride and fearlessness, but with “Germanness”:

One of many with a shaved head,  
You don't hang back because you have no fear  
Shermans, Braces, Boots, and Jeans  
German flag, because (you're) proud<sup>33</sup>

This “Germanization” of the skinhead subculture—which would be carried much further by the *Onkelz*' successors—represented an articulation of key elements of the English subculture with existing German attitudes. The foreignness of the skinhead style was attractive, but its *meaning* in the German context arose in the process of transmission. The image of manliness, hardness, and togetherness represented by the skinhead “look” took on an entirely different meaning in light of German history, and the simple patriotism espoused even by “unpolitical” skinheads in England was a statement of an entirely different kind in Germany. In “*Deutschland*” the *Onkelz* sing:

The twelve dark years in your history  
Don't destroy our ties to you  
There is no country free of dirt . . .  
Here we were born, here we want to die  
Germany, Germany, Fatherland  
Germany, Germany, the land of my birth<sup>34</sup>

This song, and the soccer hooligan song “France '84”—in which the *Onkelz* look forward to German dominance in a coming contest against France—were deemed unconstitutional by the German government, which banned *Der nette Mann* in August 1986.<sup>35</sup>

Although the ban helped to solidify the *Onkelz*' reputation as “Germany's most prominent Neo Nazi band,”<sup>36</sup> the *Böhse Onkelz* were, nevertheless, not a “Nazi Rock” band, properly speaking. As Farin and Seidel-Pielen point out, the *Onkelz*' reference in “*Deutschland*” to the Third Reich as “twelve dark years” would be considered treason by the wave of explicitly National Socialist bands

that followed them from the end of the 1980s.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the *Böhse Onkelz* paved the way for later, more radical bands. They became a point of articulation between the concepts “skinhead” and “right-wing,” communicating the basic elements of skinhead identity to a wide audience while linking them to a nationalist (German) message.

The *Onkelz*, along with *Skrewdriver*, also became a point of articulation at the level of genre, marking a shift toward a distinctive style of skinhead rock that had little to do with ska and Oi! Whereas the original Oi! music was punk rock at its most basic, incorporating shouted refrains reminiscent of the old cockney pub sing-a-long, the “Nazi rock” pioneered by bands like *Skrewdriver* and the *Böhse Onkelz* came closer to heavy metal.<sup>38</sup> Metal was a perfect vehicle for this right-wing “message rock,” as Klaus Farin observes: “The metal sound was more clearly structured, contained more bombastic elements and more opportunities to integrate mid-tempo pieces and even ballads (unthinkable in Oi! punk) in order to make it easier to understand the lyrics.” This change in style, argues Farin, mirrored the “change in mentality” represented by right-wing rock music.<sup>39</sup>

Once set firmly in a nationalist German mode, the skinhead rock pioneered in West Germany by the *Onkelz* became a site on which increasingly-radical themes of ethnic identity could be developed. The decisive phase of this development came in the wake of German reunification, a period in which socioeconomic stresses and latent ethnic tensions created an atmosphere conducive to right-wing violence. These tensions were fueled on the one hand by the influx of asylum seekers from war-torn, post-Communist eastern Europe, and on the other by the latent problem of immigrant labor in German society.<sup>40</sup> Like England, both East and West Germany turned to immigrant labor in the period after WWII. But unlike England, which could draw on former colonial subjects with full rights of citizenship, the two Germanies turned to (ostensibly temporary) non-citizen labor. In West Germany the *Gastarbeiter* (“guest workers”) who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s came largely from Germany’s historic ally, Turkey.<sup>41</sup> In East Germany, the government turned to labor from the socialist Third World countries, above all Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, and Mozambique.<sup>42</sup> In neither Germany was there any question of granting citizenship to these migrant laborers; citizenship was based not on length of residence, but on blood. In the wake of reunification, with areas of the former East Germany hard-hit by unemployment and shaken by social dislocation, the official fiction that migrant laborers were not permanent residents but temporary “guests” began to become increasingly frayed.<sup>43</sup>

It was against this background that a new wave of bands arose from the end of the 1980s to express the outlook of a generation of young German men drawn to the radical right and the skinhead scene. The content of the songs expressed a world-view that revolved around fetish items of skinhead identity (shaved heads, boots, bomber jackets, tattoos), the celebration of allegedly “proletarian” behaviors—drinking, shouting, having casual sex, fighting, etc.—and a sort of politics organized around a mythic German nationalism and ethnic-racist notions of “blood and soil.” The fusion of subcultural style and political radicalism is encapsulated in a lyric from the band *Endstufe*: “Dr. Martins, short hair, that’s

Aryan, no doubt about it! Down with mixed-blood, because that doesn't do the fatherland any good!" The resulting identity—expressed in terms at once threatening and pathetic, full of bravado yet highly pessimistic—was organized in opposition to a list of enemies. The skinhead *Feinbild*<sup>44</sup> included foreigners (above all asylum seeking refugees), the "left" (defined as punks, anarchists, and hippies), and homosexuals.<sup>45</sup> Turks and other "non-Aryans" were depicted as the source of criminality in Germany society, responsible, above all, for drug offenses and sex crimes. This "law and order" outlook, as Klaus Farin has pointed out, had little in common with the anarchic and anti-authoritarian attitude of early British Oi! punk, but instead expressed the fears and prejudices of the petit bourgeoisie. "Law and order" became a code for racist and anti-foreigner attitudes.<sup>46</sup>

The symbols of this right-wing-extremist identity were drawn from the past, not of the neighborhood pub and football match, but of German chauvinism, militarism, and National Socialism. Right-wing bands—bands with names like *Freikorps*, *Stuka*, *Sturmwehr*, and *Landser*—expressed a nostalgia for the days of the *Third Reich*, a longing after the bittersweet "romance" of lost campaigns, a celebration of the "glorious deeds" of the grandfather generation. Only a handful of the right-wing bands were explicitly National Socialist—in the sense of praising Hitler and the *Third Reich*—but all looked to some Germanic past as a mythic site of heroic identity. This goes as well for bands—like *Asgard*, *Nordwind*, and *Schlachtruf*—that adopted fantasy themes from Norse mythology, substituting "Odinism" for "Hitlerism," and turning "Vikings" into "defenders of the white race." The songs of these bands express a "politics of the lost cause," a pathetic cry against the fate of a *Volk* overrun—just as the grandfathers or tribal ancestors had been—by an "Asiatic horde."<sup>47</sup> The dangers of the modern "horde"—made up above all of asylum seekers—is expressed in countless songs: "Say the magic word: Asylum, No one can save us, we're going under, the boat is beginning to sink . . ." (*Commando Pernod*/"Asyl"); "Soon the asylum seekers will be our masters, Parasites, that's what they are, work, that's what they don't want" (*Stuka*/"Parasiten"); "What was built up over forty years they destroy in a couple of days" (*Radikahl*/"Flut").<sup>48</sup> These expressions of a "right-wing victim mentality"<sup>49</sup> are wedded to a "masculine hero complex,"<sup>50</sup> in which the misunderstood proletarian loser is transformed into a savior of the fatherland. Drawn from the same social strata as their fans, the right-wing skinhead bands supply a soundtrack by and for adolescent males living, as Peter Merkl puts it, "in a world of fantasized raids, imagined glorious deeds, and nostalgic machismo that could hardly be farther from the real threats to them or to anyone else."<sup>51</sup>

This fantasy world was linked with the all-too-real wave of terror anti-foreigner violence with gripped Germany from the late 1980s, reaching a peak in 1992–3 with the arson murders in Möln and Solingen and continuing at a steady but less-dramatic pace up to the present.<sup>52</sup> As the recent trial of three youths accused of murdering a Mozambiquian immigrant demonstrates, "Nazi rock" supplied the soundtrack for this violence.<sup>53</sup> The trial established that the attackers had shouted out the lyrics to the song "*Sturmführer*" by the skinhead band *Landser* immediately before the attack. The members of *Landser* are themselves currently

on trial, charged with forming a criminal conspiracy, inciting hatred, and violating laws against distributing National Socialist propaganda.<sup>54</sup> Yet if an earlier wave of measures aimed at Nazi rock bands is any indication, the prosecution of *Landser* may not have the hoped-for result. The publicity generated by state measures against the band *Störkraft* in the early 1990s only widened the field in which anti-foreigner ideas could circulate.<sup>55</sup> The media, notes Klaus Farin, vaulted *Störkraft*, “a third-class amateur rock band,” into the public eye “to the extent that practically every 14-year old in the country had to get an album by this ‘ultra-hard’ band if he didn’t want to be totally uncool.”<sup>56</sup>

This increase in public notoriety helped shape the further development of the skinhead scene; just as the Southall Riot and the “Strength Through Oi!” album helped to cement the right-wing reputation of the skinhead subculture and Oi! music in England at precisely the moment they were being transmitted to Germany—decisively influencing the form they took there—media attention focused on right-wing-extremist rock music and anti-immigrant violence in Germany helped radicalize the scene by winning new recruits who were attracted as much (or more) by the right-wing and anti-foreigner reputation than by the niceties of skinhead style and music. The change in the character of the scene caused by this process of “deviancy amplification” fueled further change by driving turnover in membership. After the killing of two Turks in Hamburg in 1985, for example, many older skins left the movement in disgust, opening the way for the process of identity formation to be controlled by the newcomers.<sup>57</sup> The social and political character of the skinhead subculture in Germany was further altered by the infusion of skinheads from the former East Germany at the beginning of the 1990s. The skinhead subculture had developed along largely parallel lines in the two Germanies before 1989. But just as in the case of the transmission of the subculture from England to West Germany, the transmission from West to East Germany was driven by media reports focusing on right-wing violence. The ready availability of a pre-packaged form (shaved heads, bomber jackets, boots, violence) and content (racist, anti-foreigner) was a highly attractive means of youth rebellion—especially in the “anti-fascist state”<sup>58</sup>—which attracted newer and younger recruits.<sup>59</sup> These new skinheads—some as young as 14 years old—had little connection to the original sources of skinhead identity, musical or otherwise. Their introduction into the skinhead subculture with the fall of the wall had a diluting effect; to them, being a skinhead had more to do with being a hard and violent young German nationalist than it did with listening to the same music and wearing the same clothes as English skinheads had done in 1969 or 1977.<sup>60</sup>

Thus through movement—successive removals from the source producing new subcultural and musical iterations of the original—new meanings were created that reflected back and influenced the development of the whole. Through a leap-frogging process of “communicative linkages”—re-siting skinhead style and music in a new spatial and temporal location—the meaning of “skinhead” could change from someone who admired black music and who could (at least in theory) socialize with blacks, to someone who could be plausibly seen marking Rudolf Hess’ birthday, or even firebombing Turkish women and children. To be sure, the right-wing “bonehead” and the Nazi rock band were born in England;

but it was in their new location that they could articulate with currents of xenophobia and racism, fueling a campaign of racist murder and evoking a deep and chilling historical resonance.

### iii. A Style of Politics or a Politics of Style? The Struggle over Skinhead Identity

The increasing role of skinheads in violence against immigrants makes them a sought-after constituency for right-wing extremist parties in Germany. Yet the origins of the skinhead phenomenon in a youth subculture organized around fashion and music makes such recruitment problematic, and not just because it is inherently difficult to bind disaffected and frequently alcohol-besotted young men into a disciplined regimen of rallies and demonstrations. Youth subcultures—organized as they are around an internal logic that reconfigures select commodities or elements of style into symbolic weapons against the dominant society—are inherently unstable; the meaning of the elements that signify membership are, as we have seen, open to interpretation.

This is particularly true of the skinhead subculture, and in order to understand why it is useful to think about one of the key concepts that has been used to explore how the various elements of subcultural identity fit together, that of *homology*. A subculture is homologous when all the elements of identity—music, fashion, drugs, politics—combine to form a unified whole. The classic homologous subculture is the hippie movement of the 1960s and '70s. Here, everything—drug use (“dropping out” of society in the search for altered states of consciousness and corresponding new modes of relating to the world), clothing (favoring relaxed standards of personal appearance as an antidote to the business “uniforms” of the capitalist “rat-race,” and exhibiting a preference for natural fabrics as a rejection of the perceived artificiality of industrial society), and hair length (signaling, again, the identification with nature and “the natural”)—expressed and reinforced the hippie world view. The history of youth subcultures can, to an extent, be interpreted as the history of the search for homology. The skinhead subculture, like the others, tends in the direction of homology: the short hair and sturdy clothing portray an image of proletarian manliness which expresses and reinforces an exaggerated conservatism of outlook; the practice of violence is an exaggerated “proletarian” response to the presence of the Other; the chief drug—alcohol—is a perfect fit with the “traditional” mores supposedly expressed by the subculture. Yet, the homological fit at the level of world-view is partial at best. The skinhead “look”—unlike, say, the hippie look—is open to more than one meaning. There is, as noted earlier, a rudimentary kind of politics encoded in the skinhead style; but the governing conceit of the skinhead “style community” is that to be a skinhead means to dress sharp, have fun, listen to good music, and go to parties. The introduction of right-wing politics into the style community—something that occurred, for reasons discussed above, to this particular youth subculture at a certain historic conjuncture—created a situation in which it was impossible for members to share an unproblematic identity, especially when a key focus of identity—music—expressed diametrically opposing points of view and assigned diametrically opposed meanings to *the same fetish*

*items of identity*. It is, in other words, precisely the skinhead subculture's *inability* to be homologous that makes skinhead identity a site of conflict.<sup>61</sup>

It is then hardly surprising that the politicization of the subculture in a right-wing direction has not been achieved without resistance. Indeed, forces within the movement have sought to combat the subculture's association with the radical right, emphasizing, on the one hand, the movement's multicultural roots (with their implied anti-racism), and on the other, the supposed original purity and *authenticity* of skinhead style and taste (alleged to exist in a purely aesthetic realm outside of politics). These two potentially-contradictory impulses come together in the most central focus of efforts to take back skinhead identity from the extreme right, *Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice*, or S.H.A.R.P. Founded in New York City in 1986—the same year that *Skrewdriver* records began to be imported into the US—S.H.A.R.P. was brought to the UK by Roddy Moreno, owner of Oi! Records, and frontman for the Oi! band *The Oppressed*, after a trip to the States. It subsequently moved to Germany where it became a focus of attempts to re-site the skinhead subculture in a cultural, rather than political, space. The idea behind S.H.A.R.P. was quite simple: “S.H.A.R.P. skins” professed no political affiliation, they merely insisted that the original skinheads had not been racists, pointed out that appreciation for Jamaican culture had been central to the formation of skinhead identity, and argued that, therefore, no *true* skinhead could be a racist. In practice, *Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice* did come to fill a “left-wing” function, partly because racist skins accused S.H.A.R.P. skins of being leftists, and partly because S.H.A.R.P.'s policy of allowing non-skinheads to join meant that punks and anarchists—to the scorn of most skinheads—often joined S.H.A.R.P. as a means of fighting Nazis. S.H.A.R.P.'s refusal to embrace any politics—other than being anti-Nazi—meant that its battle to reclaim skinhead identity had to be based on culture. Thus the counter-offensive against the “Nazification” of the scene of which S.H.A.R.P. was the most vocal proponent was organized more around style than it was around politics. The reaction against right-wing extremism was as much a reaction against bad style as it was against bad politics; the two were seen to be, in a way, the same thing. This was a reflection of the nature of the skinhead subculture as a “style community.”

In the final analysis, attempts to retrieve a uniform skinhead identity based on aesthetics is bound to fail, because the processes by which the skinhead subculture and its music are transmitted—temporally and spatially—transform their meaning in ways that prevent recuperation into any *Ur*-skinhead identity. This putative identity is left behind as successive iterations of subculture and genre carry ever further away from their roots and articulate with new influences. In Germany, powerful socio-historical influences work against the “cosmopolitan” outlook advocated by S.H.A.R.P. Not least among these is the effort of entrenched right-wing extremist parties to woo violent skinheads. The neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) has been particularly active in proselytizing among skinheads and has enjoyed some success in forging connections to skinhead groups, particularly in the former Eastern territories. If these efforts fall far short of the establishment of a disciplined street-fighting force like the one possessed by the Nazis in the Weimar Republic, the appearance of NPD leaders in public flanked by groups of skinheads nevertheless illustrates just how hopeless

are the efforts of skinhead purists to maintain a unitary, apolitical identity for the subculture.<sup>62</sup>

The relationship between the established radical right and the skinhead subculture remains provisional, but there are signs that the two overlapping scenes are beginning to grow together. A recent (2002) government report notes that the boundaries between the skinhead and neo-Nazi scenes are becoming “hazy,” and speaks of the creation of skinhead/neo-Nazi “hybrid cultures.”<sup>63</sup> Significantly, music plays a key mediating role in this process. An increasing number of right-wing concerts have been organized by the German branches of international skinhead organizations like *Blood & Honor* and *Hammerskins*,<sup>64</sup> and these concerts, increasingly secret and better organized, have more and more been linked to neo-Nazi demonstrations.<sup>65</sup> Right radical organizations have increasingly been getting into the music business, recognizing that record sales can allow them to make money and win recruits at the same time.<sup>66</sup> Government observers of the radical right emphasize the key importance of concerts as sites of recruitment in a scene otherwise lacking in structure, and like to refer to music as “Gateway Drug #1” for bringing youth into “the violent milieu.”<sup>67</sup>

The rhetoric of music as a dangerous “drug” is a long-standing and familiar one in conservative discourses on popular music and youth culture; but when the German government uses it in reference to skinheads and Nazi rock, it is groping toward a metaphor for a new phenomenon, one that involves not only “politics” but the intersection of politics and grassroots culture, popular music and racism, violence and fashion. And in this case the links between youth culture and dangerous behavior are real. The lyrics of bands like *Störkraft* and *Landser* make up part of a discourse that links the skinhead scene with the extremist, violent right. Nazi rock acts to dissolve the bonds that hold skinheads together as a “style community,” creating new bonds where politics, not style, is preeminent. Nothing illustrates this change more clearly than the phenomenon of the so-called “new skinheads” who—in dropping all or most vestiges of the skinhead look in order to fit into society and pursue their politics more effectively—cease to be “skinheads” at all.<sup>68</sup> When *Störkraft* sings “We’re Germany’s real police, we’ll make the streets Turk-free,” it is a rallying cry for people who want to do exactly that, whether they happen to dress like skinheads or not.<sup>69</sup>

#### iv. Conclusion

The study of popular music and youth subcultures has traditionally been long on theory and short on empirical investigation. From Theodore Adorno’s portrayal of jazz fans as the debased victims of a totalizing mass culture,<sup>70</sup> to the early cultural studies emphasis on the social significance and emancipatory potential of British post-war youth subcultures,<sup>71</sup> the tendency has been to view popular music and popular cultures through the lens of grand theory. In the former case the approach was conditioned by a patrician contempt for “the popular” rooted in the familiar dichotomy between “high” and “low” culture and exacerbated by an awareness of the fearsome possibilities of indoctrination through mass media demonstrated by German National Socialism;<sup>72</sup> in the latter it was an attempt to rescue the Marxist class struggle by tracing its thread from the realm of the political—where it seemed to be fading—into the realm of the cultural.<sup>73</sup> More



recent scholarship has been less deterministic; scholars have emphasized the agency involved in the creation of “underground” cultures,<sup>74</sup> highlighted the close interconnection between these cultures and the dominant culture,<sup>75</sup> and called attention to the key role played by media—especially popular music—in the construction of subcultures and subcultural identities.<sup>76</sup> These approaches assume that youth subcultures and popular music are worthy objects of study on their own terms and not just as expressions of a grand narrative; that because of the increasing globalization of culture, they must be studied transnationally, that is, not as they exist in supposedly static, localized formations, but as they move from one place to another; and that because of their increasing imbrication in a web of relationships that extends far beyond the realm of “youth culture,” they must be studied in their relationship to other social formations, most notably networks of commerce and consumption.<sup>77</sup> A corollary of this approach is that youth subcultures and popular music—the way they come into being, the way they change over time and mutate as they spread from one place to another, the way they interact not only in relationship to each other but with the broader society—need to be studied not just theoretically but empirically and historically.

By dint of its association with racist violence, the skinhead scene occupies a special, troubling place among youth subcultures. For this reason alone its history would merit study. But highly significant from a methodological point of view is the nature of the relationship between the subculture and popular music. As this essay has shown, what is most striking about the skinhead subculture is the extent to which it has developed through a mutually-constructing relationship with different music genres. From the Jamaican reggae prized by the original skinheads, to the “Oi! punk” of the skinhead revival, to the “Nazi rock” associated with skinhead violence in the nineties, popular music has been the site at which ideas of subcultural “cool” and “authenticity,” notions of race and ethnicity, and an increasingly radical politics come together and overlap. In exploring how and why this is so, it is hoped that this essay will contribute to a new focus on the increasingly close connections between popular culture and politics in the post-war period.<sup>78</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

1. More than one genre of music has been infiltrated by right-wing and racist beliefs. The 1990s have seen the emergence of Nazi techno and Nazi folk to name just two. See the essays in Devin Burghardt, ed., *Soundtracks to the White Revolution. White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Subcultures* (Chicago, 1999).
2. Indeed, the Oi! genre is home to a number of self-consciously anti-racist and even socialist-leaning bands that place themselves in open opposition to racist and Nazi bands. See George Marshall, *Spirit of '69. A Skinhead Bible* (Dunoon, Scotland, 1991), 143.

3. See Dick Hebdige, "The Meaning of Mod," in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson eds., *Resistance Through Rituals* (London, 1993), 87–96.
4. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* (London and New York, 1979), 55; Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: Thirtieth Anniversary Edition* (New York, 2002).
5. See Hebdige, *Subculture*, chapters 3–4; Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, pp. 44–49. Roger Sabin has recently argued that the claims of the affinity between punks and skinheads and blacks in Britain have been overstated; Roger Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By: Rethinking Punk and Racism," in Roger Sabin ed., *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London and New York, 1999), 199–218, 202. Jack Moore makes a similar but less nuanced argument in Jack Moore, *Skinheads Shaved for Battle: A Cultural History of American Skinheads* (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1993), 57.
6. Frank Cartledge has emphasized, with respect to punk rock, the highly contingent nature of "authenticity;" see Frank Cartledge, 'Distress to Impress?,' *Local Punk Fashion and Commodity Exchange*, in Sabin ed., *Punk Rock: So What?*, 143–153, 149.
7. Phil Cohen, "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community," *Working Papers in Subcultural Studies* 2, University of Birmingham: Centre for Cultural Studies (1972).
8. Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 136.
9. See the caricature in *Ibid.*, 142.
10. Hebdige, *Subculture*, 31.
11. Murray Healy, *Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation* (London, 1996), 197. For a different reading of the gay-skinhead connection see Ashley Dawson, "'Do Doc Martins Have a Special Smell?' Homocore, Skinhead Eroticism, and Queer Agency," in Kevin J.H. Dettmar and William Richey, *Reading Rock and Roll, Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics* (New York, 1999), 125–143.
12. With emphasis on "relatively;" as Frank Cartledge points out with regard to punk, "style ... cannot be [reduced] to a single simple paradigm," but must be recognized, even in a given historical moment, as the product of "difference, change and evolution related to both individual and physical space;" Cartledge, "Distress to Impress?," 149.
13. Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory. An Introduction* (Hanover and London, 1996), 134.
14. *Ibid.*, 135.
15. *Ibid.*
16. See Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By."
17. See Roger Sabin's excellent discussion of the prominence of racial humor in this period; *Ibid.*, 200; see also Stephen Wagg, *Because I Tell a Joke or Two* (London, 1998), chapter 15.
18. Stan Taylor, *The National Front in English Politics* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), 15–19; Paul Gilroy, 'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack.' *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, 1987), 44–50.
19. This was the so-called "Rivers of Blood" speech delivered in Birmingham on April 20, 1968.

20. Kenya, Uganda, and Malawi. Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By," 203. A similar scare was cooked up by the tabloid press in 1976 over the expulsion of Asians holding British passports from Malawi.
21. The National Front was founded in 1967 by Arthur Chesterton and John Tyndall, both former members of Britain's interwar fascist party, Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists. The NF achieved at one point a membership of 17,500, and reached its peak in the national elections of 1977, winning close to 250,000 votes. On the National Front's place in the English radical right see Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (Oxford, 1987). On the issue of racism and racial violence in British society see P. Pataya, ed., *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, 1993); Robert Miles and Anna Phizacklea, *White-Man's Country: Racism in British Politics* (London, 1984); Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: 'Race and 'Race' Relations in Post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1992). The NF was particularly interested in gaining recruits from the working-class youth subcultures; see Roger Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By," 200.
22. Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 19.
23. Dick Hebdige, "This is England! And They Don't Live Here," in Nick Knight, *Skinhead* (London, New York, Sydney, 1982), 26–35, 31.
24. Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 125. The British Movement, founded in 1968, was successor to the National Socialist Movement (1962–1968). It made little attempt to gain mainstream support, focusing instead on terrorism and street-combat. The British Movement profited from the collapse of the National Front after 1979; see Cronin, ed., *The Failure of British Fascism* (London, 1996).
25. Steve Silver, "Echoes of the Past," *Searchlight*, July 1999.
26. Skinhead supporters protest that not only skinheads but punks and so-called "normals" (fans with no obvious subcultural affiliation) were at the gig, and that the bands involved were not right wing; see Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 108. But the shock of the bully suddenly finding himself on the receiving end of the "boot" comes across clearly enough in skinhead complaints about the result of Southall.
27. Healy, *Gay Skins*, 124.
28. See the photo of a pre-skinhead Skrewdriver in punk regalia (with Swastikas) in Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By," 214.
29. The "rehabilitation" (and commercial success) of the *Onkelz* has progressed to the extent that they are now considered fit to headline an anti-racist ("Rock Against the Right") concert scheduled September 2004 in Halle-Münsterland. An account of the debate within the local Green Party administration regarding the band's suitability can be found at: [Http://gruene-muenster.de/print.php?sid=593](http://gruene-muenster.de/print.php?sid=593).
30. In Germany, the politicization of subcultures is more entrenched than in Britain, perhaps because of the legacy of street combat between left and right stretching back to the Weimar Republic, and recapitulated in the battles between neo-Nazi skinheads and anarchist *Autonomen* ("autonomists") described in Ingo Hasselbach's memoir of his days as a street-fighting rightist militant; *Führer-Ex. Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi* (New York, 1996). Roger Sabin argues persuasively that English punk's reputation for being left-wing is only partially deserved, and that the use of fascist iconography by performers like Siouxsie Sioux and Sid Vicious is not all innocent "provocation," as has often been claimed, and that even punk's much-vaunted romance with reggae has been overstated; Sabin, "I Won't Let That Dago By," 208–9. Moore makes a similar point; Moore, *Skinheads Shaved for Battle*, 33. On the politics of punk see James J. Ward, "This is Germany! It's 1933!" Appropriations and Constructions of 'Fascism' in New York Punk/Hardcore

in the 1980s," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30/3 (Winter 1996), 155–184, 155–162; Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York, 1981), 158–63 ("The Case of Punk"). On the connections between punk and organized anti-racist politics in Britain see Simon Frith and John Street, "Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music," in Reebe Garafalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Boston, 1992), 67–80.

31. Klaus Farin and Eberhard Seidel-Pielen eds., *Skinheads* (München, 1993), 83.
32. Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 136.
33. "Stolz," *Der nette Mann*, Rock-o-Rama, 1984.
34. "Deutschland," *Ibid.*
35. Farin and Seidel-Pielen eds., *Skinheads*, 88–9. It is estimated that over a million bootleg copies of the album have been sold since it was banned; Hans-Gerd Jaschke, Birgit Ratsch, and Yury Winterberg, *Nach Hitler. Radikale Recht rüsten auf* (München, 2001), 222.
36. *Ibid.*, 94.
37. *Ibid.*, 90.
38. It is worth noting the two bands' adoption of a classic metal device in the deliberate misspelling of the words in their names (Skrewdriver replacing the "c" in Screwdriver with a "k," the *Böhse Onkelz* replacing the "s" in *Onkels* with a "z").
39. Klaus Farin "In Valhalla sehen uns wieder," *Die Skins!* (Berlin, 2002) 224.
40. The German government estimates that 400,000–500,000 immigrants entered Germany in 1992; Rand C. Lewis, *The Neo-Nazis and German Reunification* (Westport, CT, London, 1996), 49.
41. Between roughly 1961 and 1973, large numbers of Turkish workers were recruited to make up for Germany's post-war labor shortage. As of 2002 there were approximately 2.1 million Turks in Germany (3.4% of the population); *Britannica Book of the Year* (Chicago, 2003). On Turkish immigration to Germany see Jenny B. White, "Turks in Germany: Overview of the Literature," *Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, July 1995.
42. Jaschke *et al*, *Nach Hitler*, 59.
43. For some of the sources of tension see Lewis, *The Neo-Nazis and German Reunification*, 49–52.
44. Literally, "enemy image."
45. Max Annas, "Diktatur und Alltag—Bilder und Heimat," in Max Annas and Ralph Christoph eds., *Neu Soundtracks für den Volksempfänger. Nazirock, Jugendkultur und rechter Mainstream* (Berlin—Amsterdam, 1993), 72.
46. Farin, "In Valhalla sehen uns wieder," 229.
47. Skinheads frequently pumped their grandfathers for first-hand of information on the Third Reich and the war years; Paul Hockenos, *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (New York, 1993), 85–87.
48. Max Annas, "Diktatur und Alltag ...", 75

49. Ibid., 74.

50. Peter H. Merkl, "Why are they So Strong Now? Comparative Reflections on the Revival of the Radical Right in Europe," in Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg eds., *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London, Portland, 1997), 17–46.

51. Merkl, "Why are they So Strong Now?," 39.

52. A firebomb attack on the house of a Turkish family in Solingen in May 1993 killed two women and three girls, injuring seven other people. Three Turkish girls died in a similar attack in Mölln in November of the previous year. These attacks occurred in the wake of a number of non-fatal assaults on homes for refugees in 1991–92 (Hoyerswerda, September 17–22, 1991; Schwedt, Eberswalde, Eisenhüttenstadt, Elsterwerda in October 1991; Rostock-Lichtenhagen August 23–27, 1993). In some of these attacks the assailants were cheered on by the local population. For a chilling look into the mindset of one of the perpetrators see Max Thomas Mehr and Regine Sylvester, "The Stone-Thrower from Eisenhüttenstadt," *Granta*, 42 (Winter 1992). On neo-Nazism and anti-foreigner violence in post-war Germany see Christophe Butterwege, *Rechtsextremismus, Rassismus und Gewalt: Erklärungsmodelle in der Diskussion* (Darmstadt, 1996); Dieter Schüpp, Josef Kopperschmidt, Hans Pöttgens, Hrsg., *Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt: Phänomene, Analysen, Antworten* (Mönchengladbach, 1994); Ulrich Wank, ed., *The Resurgence of Right-Wing Radicalism in Germany* (Atlantic Highlands, 1996); Jaschke et al, *Nach Hitler*; Diethelm Prowe, "Fascism, neo-Fascism, new radical right?," in Roger Griffin ed., *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London, Sydney, Auckland, 1998).

53. The immigrant Alberto Adriano was murdered in a park in the Eastern German city of Dessau in June 2000.

54. "German rock band tried on neo-Nazi charges," Associated Press, June 24, 2003.

55. It also fostered the growth of conspiratorial structures designed to escape official scrutiny; Jaschke et al, *Nach Hitler*, 224.

56. Farin, "In Valhalla sehen uns wieder," 223.

57. Klaus Farin, "Urban Rebels. Die Geschichte der Skinheadbewegung," in Klaus Farin, ed., *Die Skins. Mythos und Realität* (Berlin, 1998), 52.

58. The German Democratic Republic's official self-conception.

59. For a fascinating look into the neo-Nazi skinhead subculture in the GDR and after reunification see Hasselbach, *Führer-Ex*.

60. Farin, "Urban Rebels," 56. The former East Germany is home to just 21% of the German population, but over 50% of the number of skinheads. Since the mid-1990s the majority of skinhead-rock concerts have taken place in the East; *Bundesminister des Innern, Verfassungsschutzbericht* 1998.

61. Originally introduced by Claude Levi-Strauss, the concept of homology was first applied with respect to youth subcultures by Paul Willis; Paul E. Willis, *Profane Culture* (London, 1978). See discussion of the concept's use in Hebdige, *Subculture*, 133–117.

62. The NPD was founded in 1964, and although it has remained on the political margins for most of its existence, it has made something of a comeback since the mid-nineties. See Jaschke et al, *Nach Hitler*, 150–159; Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme nach der Wiedervereinigung* (Bonn, 1993); Norbert Fenzsch and Dietmar Schirmer, eds., *Identity and Intolerance: Nationalism, Racism, and Xenophobia in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge and NY, 1998); John David Nagle, *The*

*National Democratic Party. Right Radicalism in the Federal Republic* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1970). One notorious skinhead gang from the Dresden area, *Skinheads Sächsische Schweiz* (SSS) is openly affiliated with the NPD, providing protection for party meetings. *Die Tageszeitung*, Nr. 6820 August 7, 2002. On the SSS also see Jaschke et al, *Nach Hitler*, 252–4.

63. Bundesminister des Innern, *Verfassungsschutzbericht*, 2002.

64. Founded in the USA in 1986, the Hammerskins have formed an international network similar to *Blood & Honor*. The group established a presence in Germany in 1991. The German band *Landser* is affiliated with *Hammerskins* and is thought to have recorded several of its CDs (illegal in Germany) in the United States. On the growing connections between German and American neo-Nazi subcultures see Heléne Lööw, "White-Power Rock 'n' Roll: A Growing Industry," in Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjorgo, eds., *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture* (Boston, 1998).

65. On the importance of these concerts for the neo-Nazi scene see Lewis, *The Neo-Nazis and German Reunification*, 41.

66. See Burghardt, ed., *Soundtracks to the White Revolution*; Jaschke et al, *Nach Hitler*, 210–231.

67. Bundesminister des Innern, *Verfassungsschutzbericht*, 2002.

68. Lewis, *The Neo-Nazis and German Reunification*, 44.

69. See "Rock-Musik unterm Hakenkreuz," in Manfred Leier, Hrsg., *Un-Heil über Deutschland: Fremdenhaß und Neofaschismus nach der Wiedervereinigung* (Hamburg, 1993), 104–119.

70. Theodor Adorno, "On Jazz" (1936), in Theodor Adorno, *Essays on Music*, Selected, with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2002), 470–495.

71. The spectacular youth subcultures of post-war Britain were a main concern of the theorists associated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. The classic CCCS study is still in print: Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson eds., *Resistance Through Rituals* (London, 1995).

72. See Theodor Adorno, "What National Socialism has Done to the Arts" (1945), in Adorno, *Essays on Music*, 373–390.

73. For an excellent overview of the various schools of subcultural theory see Sarah Thornton's introduction to Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton eds., *The Subcultures Reader* (London and New York, 1997), 1–7.

74. Roger Sabin, "Introduction," in Sabin ed., *Punk Rock: So What?*, 1–13, 5.

75. Cartledge, "Distress to Impress?," 153.

76. See Negus, *Popular Music in Theory*, 24–32; David Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Milton Keynes, England; Philadelphia, 1985).

77. See discussion in Negus, *Popular Music in Theory*, espec. chapters 2 and 3.

78. Skinheads and Nazi Rock are just one example of the striking relationship between youth culture and radical politics in the post-1945 period. In Germany, the student radicals and communards of the 1960s, and the left-wing terrorists and "Hash Rebels" of the 1970s, come readily to mind. The latter were radicalized hippies who coalesced in the rioting that attended the 1965 Rolling Stones concert in Berlin. Members of the group later went on to form the terrorist "*Bewegung 2. Juni*." For accounts by key members see Ralf Reinders and Ronald Fritsch, *Die Bewegung 2. Juni. Gespräche über Haschrebellen, Lorenzführung, Knast* (Berlin, 1995); Michael Baumann, *Terror or Love? The Personal Account of a West German Urban Guerilla* (New York, 1979). These groups existed at the nexus of (counter/sub)culture and radical activism, blurring the boundaries between "cool" style, taste, and politics. Moreover, they laid the groundwork for a political style that continues to be of importance today, not least in the so-called "anti-globalization" movement, with its self-conscious internationalism, dependence on new forms of mass communication, and inseparable connection to grassroots culture. More recently, the intersection of hip hop culture and anti-racist politics—represented in Germany above all by the "*Kanak Attak*" initiative—is becoming increasingly salient. On *Kanak Attak* see Timothy S. Brown, "'Keeping it Real' in a Different 'Hood': (African)-Americanization and Hip Hop in Germany," in Dipannita Basu and Sidney Lemelle ed., *The Vinyl's Never Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Culture*, Pluto, 2005, forthcoming.